Nietzsche and Montaigne: Cheerful Naturalism

Presented by Timothy O' Sullivan for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Supervisor: Professor Graham Parkes

Department of Philosophy

Faculty of Arts

National University of Ireland

Cork

Head of Department: Professor Graham Parkes

May 2015

Table of Contents

Declaration

I, Timothy O' Sullivan, hereby confirm that this thesis has been written by me, that it is the record of work carried out by me and that it has not been submitted in any previous application for a higher degree.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Acknowledgements

During the research and writing of this thesis I received great support from the Philosophy Department, UCC. I especially owe gratitude to my supervisor, Professor Graham Parkes, for both his encouragement and patience throughout the past three years. The research for this thesis was funded by a scholarship awarded by the Irish Research Council. I wish to thank the Council for their financial support, without which this thesis would never have been completed.

Abbreviations

The following system of abbreviations has been used throughout the text:

Works by Nietzsche

AC *The Anti-Christ* (trans. Judith Norman, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005)

AOM *Assorted Opinions and Maxims* (trans. R. J. Hollingdale, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1996)

BGE *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future* (trans. Walter Kaufmann, New York: Random House, 1966)

BT *The Birth of Tragedy* (trans. Raymond Geuss and Ronald Speirs, Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999)

CW *The Case of Wagner* (trans. Judith Norman, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005)

D *Daybreak: Thoughts on the Prejudices of Morality* (trans. R. J. Hollingdale, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997)

EH *Ecce Homo: How to Become What you Are* (trans. Judith Norman, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005)

GM *On the Genealogy of Morals* (trans. Douglas Smith, New York: Oxford University Press, 1996

HAH *Human, All Too Human: A Book for Free Spirits* (trans. R. J. Hollingdale, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1996)

HL 'On the Uses and Disadvantages of History of Life' (trans. R. J. Hollingdale, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997)

GS *The Gay Science* (trans. Josephine Nauckhoff, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001)

KSA *Sämtliche Werke. Kritische Studienausgabe* (15 volumes, eds. G. Colli and M. Montinari, Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1967-77)

KSB *Sämtliche Briefe. Kritische Studienausgabe Briefe* (8 volumes, eds. G. Colli and M. Montinari, Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1986)

SE 'Schopenhauer as Educator' (trans. R. J. Hollingdale, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997)

TI *Twilight of the Idols* (trans. Judith Norman, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005)

WB 'Richard Wagner in Bayreuth' (trans. R. J. Hollingdale, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997)

WP *The Will to Power* (trans. R. J. Hollingdale and Walter Kaufmann, New York: Random House, 1967)

WS *The Wanderer and His Shadow* (trans. R. J. Hollingdale, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1996)

Z *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for Everyone and Nobody* (trans. Graham Parkes, New York: Oxford University Press, 2005)

References to the aphoristic works will cite the abbreviated title followed by the aphorism number (for example: AC 43) and to the works divided into longer sections (*The Birth of Tragedy* and the *Untimely Meditations*) the section number (BT 5, HL 4). In the cases of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, *Twilight of the Idols*, and *Ecce Homo*, references will be to the part and section numbers (TI 5.1, EH 2.1). The discussion of previous works in the third part of *Ecce Homo*, 'Why I Write Such Good Books', will be cited by the appropriate abbreviation followed by the section number (EH, 'BT' 3). Passages in the prefaces to Nietzsche's works will be referred to by 'P' followed by the section number (GS P3). In quoting from the *Nachlass*, references will be to the volume, notebook, and note numbers of the *Kritische Studienausgabe* (KSA 12: 11[105]). Where appropriate, I also cite the relevant section from *The Will to Power*. I follow the Kaufmann-Hollingdale translation. If a section from *The Will to Power* is not indicated, the translation is my own. As regards the *Kritische Studienausgabe Briefe*, references are to volume and letter number (KSB 6, 450).

Works by Montaigne

S *The Essays of Michel de Montaigne* (trans. M. A. Screech, London, England: Penguin, 1993)

T *Montaigne, Oeuvres complètes* (eds. Albert Thibaudet and Maurice Rat, Paris: Gallimard, 1962)

For textual references to Montaigne's *Essays* I give five numbers. The first Roman numeral joined by a period to an Arabic numeral refers to the book and essay number, respectively (III.4 thus means Book III, essay four). The third number is the page number in the French Pléiade edition, *Oeuvres complètes*, edited by Albert Thibaudet and Maurice Rat. The reference (T456) refers to p. 456 of the Thibaudet-Rat edition. The English translation is that of M. A. Screech, *The Essays of Michel de Montaigne*. The fourth number is the page number of the Screech edition; the reference S213 refers to p. 213. I have also consulted the English translation by Donald Frame. The last number [in brackets] refers to the page number in the Frame translation.

Introduction

Nietzsche's writings are replete with attacks on past philosophers—Socrates, Plato, Kant and Hegel: all these are subject to his censure. Even Schopenhauer, whose philosophy is of fundamental importance to Nietzsche and whom he greatly admired, is not immune from criticism: his philosophical pessimism is persistently mocked in Nietzsche's later work. In this context, Nietzsche's unwavering reverence for Montaigne appears all the more remarkable. It is probable that Nietzsche first began to read Montaigne's *Essays* in 1870, and their impact on him was substantial. Writing a few years later, he has this so say on the essayist: 'That such a man wrote has truly augmented the joy of living on this earth...If I were set the task, I could endeavour to make myself at home in the world with him' (SE 2). Montaigne's example as a philosopher served as a major inspiration for Nietzsche's own philosophical project, and what is more, Montaignean themes receive extensive treatment in Nietzsche's middle works. But the *Essays* continue to be of major importance for Nietzsche into his late works. Thomas Brobjer, in his study of Nietzsche's philosophical reading, notes the resurgence of Nietzsche's interest in Montaigne during the period 1883-5, an interest that remains strong until the end of his writing life.[1] In *Ecce Homo*, one of his final published works, Nietzsche yet again singles out the essayist for exceptional praise: 'I have something of Montaigne's mischief in my spirit, who knows! Perhaps in my body too' (EH 2.3). I follow WD Williams, therefore, in arguing that, from the *Untimely Meditations* onward, the influence of the *Essays* on Nietzsche's thought is both 'continuous and profound'.[2]

Perhaps Nietzsche found Montaigne so immediately compelling because their visions of the world coincide in the most fundamental respects: sharing a Heraclitean view of reality, both are affirmers of becoming. But Nietzsche's admiration for Montaigne is based not just on his celebration of transience. Nietzsche's thought on a whole range of subjects is prefigured in the *Essays*: on the overcoming of suffering, on philosophy as a way of life, on the need to critically engage tradition, on the art of psychological dissection, on experimental philosophizing, on morality as custom and the link between cruelty and conscience, on the multiplicity of the self, on ethical

[1] Brobjer, *Nietzsche's Philosophical Context*, p. 90.
[2] Williams, *Nietzsche and the French*, p. 172.

naturalism, on healthy self-love. Montaigne is an exemplar for Nietzsche as a philosopher, psychologist, sceptic and naturalist, and this is not to mention similarities in style. Montaigne's essay form and Nietzsche's distinctive aphoristic style provide the freedom to tackle a range of issues from many different perspectives. The extent to which other features of Nietzsche style are to be found in the *Essays* is also remarkable: the widespread use of comic sarcasm and irony, the *ad hominem* attacks, a delight in imagery and metaphor, the constant rhetorical attempts to provoke and engage the reader. Indeed, Nietzsche's innovative approach to philosophical writing seems unthinkable without Montaigne.

It is thus my contention that the *Essays* were crucially significant in shaping much of Nietzsche's philosophy, a significance not fully appreciated by scholarship hitherto. In fact, there has yet to be a thorough exploration of the Nietzsche-Montaigne relationship in the form of a book-length study; and much of the previous scholarship touching on this area has been chiefly concerned with examining the more general subject of the influence of the French philosophical tradition on Nietzsche's thought: for instance, Williams's *Nietzsche and the French*, and Brendan Donnellan's *Nietzsche and the French Moralists*. Williams argues that Nietzsche admired Montaigne more than any other of the French moralists and that we may discern the clear influence of the essayist on Nietzsche's writing as early as the *Untimely Meditations* (1873-6). Moreover, he claims that Montaigne played a major role in Nietzsche's turn away from the romantic pessimism of *The Birth of Tragedy*, his first published work. Stressing the importance of self-knowledge, the *Essays* revealed to Nietzsche the need for a psychological approach to philosophical problems. What we thus find in his middle works, as in the *Essays*, is a penetrating examination of the true springs of human action and motivation. For Williams, Nietzsche takes over and expands upon Montaigne's ideas on morality as custom and the mutual dependency of good and evil. Furthermore, he proposes that the notion of 'becoming what you are'—forming oneself according to the inner laws of one's own being—is at the heart of the *Essays* as well as Nietzsche's middle and late works.

Like Williams, Donnellan observes how both share a belief in the interdependence of good and evil and an appreciation of the significance of custom for the formation of moral conscience. Unlike Williams, he emphasizes Montaigne's influence on Nietzsche as a free thinker and sceptic. In addition, Donnellan argues that much in the *Essays* anticipates Nietzsche's 'ambiguous attitude' toward scientific

enquiry: suspicious of the notion of mechanical law, both thinkers agree on the limitations of a causal-deterministic mode of reasoning.[3] Another issue on which we find agreement is the fundamental importance of the body. Donnellan underscores the extent to which both Montaigne and Nietzsche frequently demand that their readers heed the wisdom of the body. Donnellan also draws out similarities in style, noting in particular how both the essay and the aphorism promote an open-ended and experimental mode of philosophizing.

Only a handful of scholars have deemed the Nietzsche-Montaigne relationship to be a subject worthy of study in its own right. While Williams and Donnellan focus on the importance of the *Essays* for Nietzsche's middle period, David Molner, in his article 'The Influence of Montaigne on Nietzsche', looks to Nietzsche's late works. Molner highlights three aspects of the Nietzsche-Montaigne relationship. Firstly, elaborating on Donnellan's examination, he argues that Montaigne's harmonious 'balance of body and soul' is the inspiration behind Nietzsche's ideas on the intimate connection between physiological need and philosophical thought.[4] He also argues that Nietzsche found in Montaigne a 'partner in torment', someone who knew all too well the pain of bodily suffering.[5] Secondly, Molner examines the impact of the *Essays* on Nietzsche's style of philosophical writing. Building on Donnellan's insights into the parallels between the essay and the aphorism, Molner stresses how a flexibility of style allowed both thinkers not only to overcome the dogmatism of traditional philosophic discourse but also to engage in honest self-presentation. Finally, Molner suggests that Montaigne, given his refusal of resentment and complete affirmation of life, may have been a 'sketch' for Nietzsche's conception of the overhuman.

In Vivetta Vivarelli's 'Montaigne und der "Freie Geist"', the attention is again on Nietzsche's middle works, *Human, All Too Human* especially. Vivarelli takes up a line of thought present, but not pursued, in Donnellan: Montaigne as a model for the Nietzschean 'free spirit'. Indeed, for Vivarelli, it was Nietzsche's reading of Montaigne that prepared the ground for his close study of the later French moralists, beginning in the late 1870's. By juxtaposing quotations from the *Essays* and *Human, All Too Human*, Vivarelli draws out certain features that are common to both Montaigne and the 'free spirit'. Foremost among them is an 'unquenchable thirst' for freedom, freedom, that is,

[3] Donnellan, *Nietzsche and the French Moralists*, p. 26.
[4] Molner, "The Influence of Montaigne on Nietzsche", p. 81.
[5] Ibid., p. 85.

from the 'tyrannical' forces of conventional opinion, custom and habit.[6] What both seek above all is absolute intellectual independence, a complete detachment from any social obligations that may alienate one from oneself. In line with Williams, Vivarelli also proposes that Montaigne's 'cheerful wisdom' served as a kind of 'antidote' for Nietzsche against the life-denying sickness of Schopenhauerian pessimism.[7]

Dudley Marchi discusses the Nietzsche-Montaigne relationship in a chapter of his *Montaigne among the Moderns*. Unlike previous scholars, Marchi explores Montaigne's significance for Nietzsche's early philosophy, his thinking on the historical in particular. Marchi argues that we can see a similarity in 'discursive characteristics' between Nietzsche's tripartite historical schema of the antiquarian, the monumental and the critical, as outlined in 'On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life', the second of his *Untimely Meditations*, and Montaigne's approach to the historical in the *Essays*.[8] The writings of both thinkers reflect a deep tension between revering the past and living vigorously in the present. For Marchi, both Montaigne and Nietzsche promote an active engagement with tradition. Not only do both thinkers use digestive metaphors to capture the process of taking the past into oneself but they also stress the need for an active forgetting that would open up a space for the unhistorical. Marchi suggests that, beyond Montaigne's sceptical independence, it is the essayist's creative appropriation of the Greco-Roman tradition that Nietzsche most admired.

Although not strictly concerned with the influence of Montaigne on Nietzsche, Dorothea B. Heitsch, in *Practising Reform in Montaigne's Essais*, uses Nietzsche as an 'interpretative means' to come to terms with specific aspects of Montaigne's writing.[9] Heitsch argues that we should view Montaigne, a thinker who takes up an extra-moral position, as akin to the Nietzschean immoralist who goes beyond good and evil. In this connection, Heitsch also observes the extent to which both thinkers approach morality from a determinedly psychological perspective. Further developing a theme already touched on by Molner, Heitsch emphasizes how both Montaigne and Nietzsche see writing style as having a physiological basis. For Heitsch, Nietzsche follows the essayist in understanding philosophy as inherently autobiographical, and expressive of the philosopher's character and physical nature. Another important parallel between the two

[6] Vivarelli, "Montaigne und der 'Freie Geist'", p. 85.
[7] Ibid., p. 100.
[8] Marchi, *Montaigne among the Moderns*, p. 135.
[9] Heitsch, *Practising Reform in Montaigne's Essais*, p. 5.

thinkers, Heitsch suggests, is the way they both demand attentive and competent readers who will engage their texts actively and creatively.

Most recently, Jessica Berry has claimed, in 'The Pyrrhonian Revival in Montaigne and Nietzsche', that Montaigne makes a 'substantive contribution' to Nietzsche's thought by giving 'impetus' to the naturalism that begins to develop in *Human, All Too Human*.[10] Berry argues that Nietzsche follows Montaigne in viewing metaphysical explanations as 'psychologically suspect': both thinkers understand the dogmas of religion and metaphysics as 'pathological' and symptomatic of psychological ill-health.[11] Moreover, both insist that we go astray to the extent that we treat the human being as above and apart from other creatures. For Nietzsche as for Montaigne, the task of philosophy must be to 'translate' humanity back into nature, to bring us back into conformity with the rest of the natural world. Berry also claims that Nietzsche's naturalism has its 'roots' in the Pyrrhonian scepticism that Montaigne seems to endorse in the *Essays*. Taking up these themes again in a chapter of her *Nietzsche and the Ancient Skeptical Tradition*, Berry attempts to show how scepticism motivates the naturalisms of both Montaigne and Nietzsche. Berry proposes that Pyrrhonian scepticism, a 'naturalistic' scepticism, is compatible with the kind of 'methodological naturalism' that Nietzsche would wish to advance.[12]

Why has the Nietzsche-Montaigne relationship received so little attention? The first issue to consider is the comparative neglect of Nietzsche's middle works, *Human, All Too Human* and *Daybreak* in particular, and the extent to which the *Untimely Meditations* have been deemed worthy of philosophical interest only insofar as they foreshadow central themes of Nietzsche's later writing. The relative disregard of these works is crucial, since it is in the *Untimely Meditations* that Nietzsche offers Montaigne as a philosophical ideal above all others, and it is in *Human, All Too Human* and *Daybreak* that Montaigne's influence as a moral psychologist, sceptic and naturalist is most obviously apparent. Furthermore, this first problem has been compounded by a second: Montaigne is virtually ignored as a serious thinker, his *Essays* taken as a work of literature, not philosophy. But the features of Montaigne's philosophical writing that have led him to be routinely overlooked in histories of Western philosophy would, for Nietzsche, make him more of a philosopher, not less. Indeed, on the Nietzschean

[10] Berry, "The Pyrrhonian Revival in Montaigne and Nietzsche", p. 498.
[11] Ibid., p. 499.
[12] Berry, *Nietzsche and the Ancient Skeptical Tradition*, p. 95.

account, it is only the 'prejudices' of the Western philosophical tradition that have prevented us from seeing Montaigne as a major thinker.

In his study of the *Essays*, Richard Sayce offers a number of reasons to account for Montaigne's exclusion 'from the ranks of officially recognized philosophers'.[13] First is his complete 'immersion' in becoming: for Nietzsche, Montaigne is thus free of one of the troubling 'idiosyncrasies' of most other philosophers, who are united in 'their hatred of the very idea of becoming': 'Heraclitus will always be right in thinking that being is an empty fiction' (TI 3.1-2). Second is Montaigne's practical orientation and his rejection of metaphysical speculation: Nietzsche also denounces metaphysics and, no less than the essayist, sees genuine philosophizing as grounded in lived experience. Third is the unsystematic form of Montaigne's writing: in Nietzsche's view, 'the will to a system is a lack of integrity' (TI 1.26). Fourth is the way he emphasizes the importance of the body over that of the soul: Nietzsche's Zarathustra declares: 'Body am I through and through, and nothing besides; and the soul is merely a word for something about the body' (Z 1.4). Another reason, as suggested by Ullrich Langer, is the very personal nature of Montaigne's writing:[14] in this way, Montaigne shows an acute awareness of what Nietzsche claims very few philosophers have been willing to admit: 'In the philosopher…there is nothing whatever that is impersonal' (BGE 6). It thus becomes apparent that everything which separates Montaigne from the Western philosophical tradition moves him closer to Nietzsche. And in his overcoming of that same tradition, Nietzsche found a sympathetic voice in Montaigne.

The final matter to bear in mind, as regards the dearth of scholarship in this area, is Montaigne's apparent orthodoxy. It simply doesn't seem credible that a Catholic conservative and staunch defender of the status quo could be an important exemplar for a thinker as revolutionary as Nietzsche. But to accept such a view would be to fail to seriously engage the radical intent of the *Essays*. For Montaigne is a profoundly esoteric thinker, his mask of piety adopted for prudential reasons, as protection against the censors in Rome and the ruling Catholic power. Writing at the end of the 16th century, Montaigne risked imprisonment and perhaps execution, if he openly questioned Christian dogma.[15] Yet, this is not to deny that there has been a sharp divide in the literature, between those scholars who accept Montaigne's professions of faith as

[13] Sayce, *The Essays of Montaigne*, p. 161.
[14] Langer, "Introduction", *The Cambridge Companion to Montaigne*, p. 2.
[15] Giordano Bruno, the Italian philosopher and mathematician, was arrested in 1592 and burned at the stake in 1600, for holding beliefs contrary to the Catholic faith.

genuine and those who do not. However, I agree with David Schaefer that it is the latter group that make a more forceful argument, having a far greater weight of evidence on their side.[16] Just to mention *some* of the heterodox elements of the *Essays*: not once does Montaigne even imply that we should see the life of Jesus or the lives of the Christian saints and martyrs as exemplary; he rarely quotes from the Bible, which is never taken as authoritative on any question; he rejects the idea of an immortal soul and the assumption of our superiority over other creatures; he denounces asceticism and encourages the enjoyment of sexuality; he seldom mentions sin and advises against repentance; he argues that our conceptions of God are nothing more than anthropomorphisms. With good reason, the *Essays* were eventually placed on the Church's index of proscribed books in 1676, Montaigne having failed, by the time of his death in 1592, to make the alterations recommended by the censors at the time of publication.

But of course, for our purposes, the crucial question is not the relative merits of the case for Montaigne as conservative or revolutionary. What matters is how Nietzsche actually saw him, and on this there can be no doubt: it is the heterodox, not the orthodox, Montaigne who is Nietzsche's exemplar. As himself a master of the esoteric, Nietzsche sees behind Montaigne's mask of piety. Indeed, Laurence Lampert argues that we may understand the 'virtuous dissimilation' of figures such as Montaigne and Descartes as allowing them to 'fight covertly' the battles that Nietzsche has the freedom to wage more 'overtly'.[17] And Nietzsche was fully aware of the presence of the *Essays* on the 'Index in the Vatican' (KSA 13: 11[65]). For him, not only is Montaigne not a Christian, but his thought is something that Christianity—in the person of Pascal—had to defend itself against (KSA 12: 7[69]). In a letter to Heinrich von Stein in March, 1885, Nietzsche recommends the reading of the *Essays* as a substitute for his own 'dangerously strong wine' (KSB 7, 584). Only the 'dangerous' Montaigne can explain Nietzsche's need to return time and again to the *Essays* for inspiration. Only this Montaigne could be his 'spiritual father':[18] he could have made himself 'at home in the world' with no other.

---

[16] Schaefer, *The Political Philosophy of Montaigne*, p. 42.
[17] Lampert, *Nietzsche and Modern Times*, pp. 246, 263.
[18] Sarolea, *German Problems and Personalities*, p. 97. For Heitsch, Charles Sarolea is perhaps 'the first writer to realize the kinship between the two authors' (*Practising Reform in Montaigne's Essais*, p. 24n54). Sarolea offers a very brief, but very insightful, discussion of the Nietzsche-Montaigne relationship: 'The real and esoteric Montaigne is, like Nietzsche, a herald of revolt, one of the most revolutionary thinkers of all times' (p. 98).

In what follows, I attempt to address this lacuna in the literature regarding the importance of Montaigne for Nietzsche's philosophical development. Considering Nietzsche's singular praise of Montaigne and the many points of convergence in their thinking, a study is warranted that focuses specifically on the philosophical influence that Nietzsche's reading of the *Essays* exerted on his work. Such a study offers the following: to place Montaigne beside Nietzsche, not only gives us a clearer and fuller picture of what Nietzsche takes as the task of the philosopher but it also forces us to recognize crucial yet seldom emphasized aspects of Nietzsche's philosophical project: his conception of philosophy as a way of life, his reverence for tradition, his mission to translate humanity back into nature, his stress on the multiplicity of the self and the importance of the body. To look at Montaigne through the lens of Nietzsche, not only affords a new angle into Montaigne's moral psychology, which Nietzsche broadened and deepened, and his scepticism and naturalism, but it also allows the drawing out of the more radical elements of Montaigne's thought—likely to escape attention in a straightforward reading—thereby making plain his relevance and importance to contemporary philosophy. Furthermore, an examination of Montaigne's influence on Nietzsche will be helpful in illuminating the contours of Nietzsche's thought as he moved away from the romanticism of *The Birth of Tragedy* to the sustained psychological observation of *Human, All Too Human* and naturalism of his middle and late works.

Chapter 1: The Philosopher's Task

Chapter 1 deals with the importance of Montaigne for Nietzsche's *Untimely Meditations*, in particular 'Schopenhauer as Educator' and 'On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for life'. Considering that Nietzsche always saw 'Schopenhauer as Educator' as essential to an understanding of his mature philosophy, his tribute to Montaigne in this work must be taken seriously. In section I, I discuss how Nietzsche's admiration for Montaigne announces a reorientation in his thinking, as he breaks free from Schopenhauerian pessimism. While other commentators note Montaigne's significance in this respect, they have failed to explain what precisely Nietzsche finds so appealing about Montaigne's distinctive 'cheerfulness'. I suggest that Montaigne earns Nietzsche's praise for his capacity to celebrate—despite its suffering—the joy and wonder of life. Furthermore, displaying no fear of a world of becoming,

Montaigne possesses the fortitude to celebrate the transience of existence. I thus argue that Nietzsche's reading of the *Essays* gave impetus to the development of his own conception of a 'pessimism of strength'. I also examine the way in which both thinkers, seeking to restore innocence to becoming, view laughter as the most appropriate response to the contingency of the human condition. I conclude this section by suggesting that, in encouraging his escape from Schopenhauer, Montaigne becomes a new exemplar for Nietzsche.

Section II takes up Nietzsche's distinctive conception of philosophy as a way of life. In 'Schopenhauer as Educator', he promotes a distinctly Hellenistic conception of the philosopher, where philosophy is understood as art of living rooted in practical activity. I argue that Nietzsche places Montaigne at the centre of this work not only because of his affirmation of life but also because the essayist so clearly anticipates Nietzsche's own conception of the philosopher. For Nietzsche, Montaigne's freedom and intellectual independence allow him to lead a genuinely philosophical existence. Furthermore, I discuss how Montaigne's attack on the medieval scholar, based on a Greco-Roman understanding of the philosopher, informs Nietzsche's polemics against the German education system. I end section II by exploring the extent to which Nietzsche's plea, at the beginning of 'Schopenhauer as Educator', to free ourselves from convention and return to authentic existence follows the Montaignean demand that we liberate ourselves from the tyrannical force of custom. Moreover, I suggest that the influence of the *Essays*, in this connection, extends beyond 'Schopenhauer as Educator', helping to shape Nietzsche's later notion of the philosopher as a 'free spirit'.

Despite Montaigne's reverence for the great figures of the Greco-Roman world, he is in no sense a thinker enslaved by tradition. Always retaining a healthy intellectual distance from the ancients, Montaigne's engagement with the past is fundamentally critical. In order to understand his complex relationship to the historical, I propose that we should look to Nietzsche, who examines, in 'On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life', three distinct ways in which the individual relates to the historical: the monumental, the antiquarian, and the critical. Section III draws out the many aspects of Nietzsche's discussion of the historical that are clearly prefigured in the *Essays*. I argue that Nietzsche sees in Montaigne a preeminent example of what he calls the 'plastic power', the capacity to transform and incorporate the past into oneself. Both thinkers promote an active forgetting so as to ensure the creative assimilation of the past. Furthermore, on the Nietzschean account, a critical approach to the historical is an

essential task of the philosopher. Having achieved self-knowledge and intellectual independence, the philosopher must confront the additional task of creating new cultural values. I claim that Nietzsche offers Montaigne as a philosophical ideal above all others because he embodies this kind of 'critical spirit'.

Chapter 2: The Art of Psychological Dissection

In Chapter 2, I move onto Nietzsche's middle period and discuss Montaigne's importance for Nietzsche as a psychologist and sceptic. Section I deals with Nietzsche's turn to a more psychologically-orientated philosophy, his recognition of the importance of self-knowledge and the art of psychological dissection. I explore how Montaigne's undermining of metaphysical speculation by way of a psychological approach anticipates Nietzsche's more incisive examination of the all-too-human motives underlying artistic, religious and metaphysical ideals. Next I examine the extent to which Montaigne's scepticism inspires Nietzsche's attack on philosophical and religious dogmatism in *Human, All Too Human*. Both thinkers emphasize the limitations of language and the errors constitutive to reason. I end this section by arguing that Nietzsche takes over from Montaigne a form of sceptical attitude in which doubt coexists with the relentless pursuit of knowledge and an unconditional affirmation of life.

I begin section II with a discussion of how Nietzsche, like Montaigne, understands the exemplary philosophical life in terms of a continuous process of experience and experiment. For both thinkers, the philosopher must use his or her life as a means to knowledge. In this way, the 'free spirit' of Nietzsche's middle works follows Montaigne in adopting an experimental mode of philosophizing. Next I examine Montaigne's influence on Nietzsche's moral psychology. First I explore the way in which both thinkers seek to undermine the metaphysical foundations of morality; they agree that, at the most fundamental level, morality is nothing other than obedience to custom. Then I examine the intimate connection both see between cruelty and conscience, and I propose that the *Essays* prepare the ground for Nietzsche's re-evaluation of 'egoistic' actions. For Montaigne as well as for Nietzsche, the notion that the highest moral actions are guided by wholly selfless behaviour represents a misunderstanding of human motivation. Both recognize that the virtuous and wicked alike draw pleasure from their behaviour.

In the final section of Chapter 2, I begin to trace the influence of the *Essays* on Nietzsche's thought beyond the free spirit trilogy of his middle period. Throughout the *Essays*, Montaigne questions the notion of a fixed and unified soul. In his middle and late works, Nietzsche absorbs what Montaigne has to say on the nature of the self and launches an even deeper critique of what he calls 'soul atomism'. Both thinkers repudiate the traditional understanding of the soul in favour of a new conception of the soul as a 'subjective multiplicity', dissolving the supposedly singular 'I' into a plurality of wills and persons. Furthermore, determined to complicate our psychological lives, both Montaigne and Nietzsche seek to uncover the myriad motivational pathways that lead to action. I conclude this section by examining the extent to which Montaigne anticipates Nietzsche in understanding behaviour as determined by motive forces that remain below the level of conscious thought. For both thinkers, the most decisive operations of the soul are opaque and essentially unknowable.

Chapter 3: Human and Nature

In Chapter 3, I examine the importance of the *Essays* for the naturalism at the centre of Nietzsche's middle and late works. In the opening section, I argue that Montaigne's eagerness to celebrate humanity's continuity with the rest of nature points Nietzsche in the direction of the cheerful naturalism that orients his thinking from *Human, All Too Human* onward. I argue furthermore that the 'insane task' that Nietzsche sets himself, of translating humanity back into nature, is essentially continuous with Montaigne's mission to deflate presumption and place the human being back within the natural world. In this section I also explore the way in which both Montaigne and Nietzsche, to the extent that we have abandoned nature, diagnose an acute 'sickness' in humanity. And while both thinkers lament our separation from the instinctual certainty of other creature as a great loss, it is primarily an axiological sickness that both seek to expose: our propensity to create values and ideals that promote guilt and self-loathing. I conclude section I with a discussion of how both thinkers look to more primitive cultures as exemplifying a healthier form of humanity.

Both Montaigne and Nietzsche seek to overturn the values of asceticism, to repudiate the notion that the highest human ideal is that which takes us away from the body and the earthly. Section II begins with a discussion of the contempt both thinkers share for any belief system that would devalue earthly life. I then move on to explore the way in which, through their respective projects of re-naturalization, they aim to

counteract unhealthy desires of transcendence. I argue that Nietzsche discerns in Montaigne's thought one of the central aspects of the Dionysian attitude: a disavowal of the language of redemption. In addition, I suggest that Nietzsche follows Montaigne in his desire to return sacredness to the earth. I conclude by returning to the issue of scepticism, and propose that both thinkers endorse a form of scepticism that could be described as 'experimental', rather than Pyrrhonian. This 'stronger' scepticism, while opening up the possibility of endless experiment and enquiry, allows nonetheless for a 'certainty of value standards': both thinks strive to replace life-denying values with naturalistic values.

The final section of this chapter examines the affinities between Montaigne's delight in corporeal existence and Nietzsche's Dionysian affirmation of the body. For both thinkers, the re-naturalization of values centrally involves a reconsideration of the status of the body. And they agree that we should understand the human being as 'body through and through'. In this section I also explore how both thinkers engage in a form of autobiographical philosophizing that could be called 'body philosophy': for Montaigne and Nietzsche, the self-knowledge that informs their respective philosophies has its basis in the 'great reason' of the body. I thus claim that Nietzsche looks to the *Essays* as a model work of philosophical autobiography. I end this section by arguing that, since Montaigne's bodily suffering serves only to intensify his earthly gratitude, there can be, on the Nietzschean account, no more perfect embodiment of true physiological health than the philosophical example provided by the *Essays*.

Chapter 4: Higher Naturalism

For both Montaigne and Nietzsche, the advancement of an ethical naturalism is central to the task of translating humanity back into nature. Section I details how, in order to develop a healthy standard of moral evaluation, both thinkers adopt the extra-moral position of a philosophical anthropologist. Throughout the *Essays*, there is one moral prejudice in particular that Montaigne seeks to undermine: the idea of a fundamental antithesis between good and evil. Like Nietzsche, he understands good and evil not as opposites, but as mutually interdependent. What is more, both accept 'evil' as of fundamental value in the general economy of life. I argue that Nietzsche takes over and expands upon Montaigne's core criticism of traditional ascetic morality: that it aims for the suppression of natural desires and instincts, and is, therefore, anti-natural and anti-life. Furthermore, both Montaigne and Nietzsche cast the move away from traditional

notions of virtue as a return to 'health', that is, to a natural virtue no longer directed toward the transcendence of human nature, but rather toward the most vital expression of that nature. I conclude this section with a brief account of the way in which both thinkers attempt to set up a naturalistic standard of valuation.

Although Montaigne and Nietzsche call for a return to nature, stressing the health of primitive cultures, the return they have in mind is not so much a going back as an ascent into a higher naturalism. Section II explores the idea of a naturalism geared toward cultural progress, the celebration and cultivation of natural drives and capacities. For both thinkers, such progress is possible because human nature always constitutes an amalgam of first and second nature, a second nature formed by culture. I propose that we may understand both Montaigne and Nietzsche as advocating a self-aware naturalism, where the incorporation of an appropriate second nature can enhance and complement what is given in our body and physiology. In other words, a naturalism that seeks to improve on nature through the assimilation of self-knowledge. I end this section by arguing that what follows from this kind of naturalism is the cultivation of a natural, innocent and self-expressive virtue.

The final section begins with a discussion of how this higher naturalism might be achieved. Since both thinkers abandon the traditional, ascetic route to self-mastery—reason as ruler in the soul—this is a matter that becomes especially pressing. Indeed, both Montaigne and Nietzsche understand reason as performing an important but merely instrumental role in the psyche. Their goal, however, is not to abandon the ideal of self-mastery outright, but to substantially revise it: they both advocate a form of self-mastery that manifests in an instinctual, effortless and relaxed virtue. Next I move on to explore the many elements of Nietzsche's conception of 'becoming what you are' that are anticipated in the *Essays*. For both thinkers, individuals create themselves insofar as they act in accordance with the laws of their own nature. I conclude by examining the extent to which Nietzsche follows Montaigne in conceiving life affirmation in terms of a love of fate. And for both, this love of fate takes the form of a complete immersion in the momentary present.

CHAPTER 1: THE PHILOSOPHER'S TASK

Section I: 'Schopenhauer as Educator'

The significance of 'Schopenhauer as Educator'

No thinker is more important to Nietzsche's early philosophical development than Arthur Schopenhauer. At the outset of his philosophical life, Nietzsche tells us, he came to the writings of Schopenhauer in a state of 'need, distress and desire', and discovered a body of work that he felt had been written just for him (SE 2). Nietzsche's first published work, *The Birth of Tragedy*, is suffused with Schopenhauerian ideas and terminology, with extensive quotations from Schopenhauer's *The World as Will and Representation*. *The Birth of Tragedy* is concerned, in part, with setting out a path to the reinvigoration of German culture, 'a renewal and reformation of the German spirit', which Nietzsche believed to be in a state of ossification and decay (BT 20). This project takes centre stage in his next work, *Untimely Meditations*, and in 'Schopenhauer as Educator', the third *Meditation*, Nietzsche puts forward Schopenhauer as an exemplar to his contemporaries. For Nietzsche, Schopenhauer's example, owing to his 'dignified distance' from the culture around him, points the way to new and transfiguring cultural goals, free of the forces of money-making and the demands of the state—misappropriations of cultural energy. In this sense, Nietzsche claims, Schopenhauer is an educator in the most necessary and profound sense, for by way of his example, followers can endeavour to raise themselves above their 'insufficiencies insofar as these originated in the age' (SE 2).

What is notable is that, unlike *The Birth of Tragedy*, 'Schopenhauer as Educator' contains little or no actual reference to Schopenhauer's philosophical ideas. In fact, from the *Untimely Mediations* onwards, Nietzsche becomes progressively more scornful of Schopenhauer's philosophy, even if he continues to admire Schopenhauer the man. In *Twilight of the Idols*, writing near the end of his philosophical life, Nietzsche describes Schopenhauer as 'the last German of any consequence', yet at the same time condemns his philosophy as a 'nihilistic … depreciation of the value of life' (TI 9.21). In a note written in 1887, he has this to say: 'Around 1876 I was terrified to see all I had desired

hitherto *compromised*. … I grasped that my instinct went in the opposite direction from Schopenhauer's' (KSA 12: 9[42] (WP 1005)). This comment is particularly revealing, not only in suggesting how much Nietzsche feared distancing himself from the philosopher who had originally inspired him but also in showing the singular importance of the *Untimely Meditations*, the final installment of which had been published that very year. It is evident that, for Nietzsche, the *Untimely Meditations* mark a decisive turning point is his thinking: here, for the first time, he begins to separate himself from the Schopenhauerian vision of life, and move forward with his own, independent philosophical project. Indeed, in a letter to his friend Peter Gast in 1883, he insists that, as regards his later writing, 'everything was already promised' in 'Schopenhauer as Educator' (KSB 6, 405).

'Schopenhauer as Educator', then, is essential to understanding the origins of Nietzsche's mature philosophy. In *Ecce Homo*, his philosophical autobiography, Nietzsche makes this point explicitly and emphatically: '*Schopenhauer as Educator* bears my innermost history, my *becoming* inscribed within it' (EH, 'UM' 3). He concedes that, in retrospect, far from being a work devoted to Schopenhauer and beholden to Schopenhauerian ideas, this work should be more appropriately entitled 'Nietzsche as Educator', such is 'the *great* freedom [*der grossen Freiheit*]' that 'blows over everything' (ibid.). More crucial still, and in line with the note quoted above, Nietzsche is adamant that the voice who speaks in 'Schopenhauer as Educator' is certainly not Schopenhauer, but 'his *opposite*' (ibid.). That is to say, Nietzsche, following the *Untimely Meditations*, comes to understand his philosophy not just as being in broad disagreement with Schopenhauerian pessimism but its antithesis, and dedicated to its repudiation. Thus, in *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche asserts that, in contrast to the resignation counselled by Schopenhauer's 'world-denying' pessimism, he is offering 'the opposite ideal: the ideal of the most high-spirited, alive and world-affirming human being' (BGE 56). The roots of this counter-ideal may be traced back to *The Birth of Tragedy*, and more particularly, to Nietzsche's discussion of the *Dionysian*.

Schopenhauerian pessimism versus the Dionysian

Schopenhauer's bleak, thorough-going pessimism is exemplified in his claim that 'nothing else can be stated as the aim of our existence except the knowledge that it

would be better for us not to exist'.[1] Such hostility towards existence grows out of his metaphysics. Drawing on Kantian thought, Schopenhauer proposes that behind the phenomenal world represented to us by our senses our life is propelled by an all-consuming will, which is the fundamental reality. Furthermore, this will is one of endless striving and desiring, never to be satisfied. In consequence, suffering is inescapable and ubiquitous; we are doomed to exist in a permanent state of need and deficiency. At times, in *The Birth of Tragedy*, by adopting unmistakably Schopenhauerian language, Nietzsche seems to endorse a kind of Schopenhauerian pessimism. But this could not be further from the truth. As John Sallis points out, 'tragedy is for Nietzsche no escape from willing and from the suffering implicated therein … but rather a disclosure capable of leading one back from pessimism to affirmation'.[2] For Schopenhauer, the purpose of tragic art, and the highest end of life, is a renunciation of the will and a denial of the will to life: only by ceasing to strive can we hope to be redeemed from suffering. Tragic art, in other words, brings us face to face with the sufferings of existence so that we may accept our fate and resign ourselves to the futility of life. Nietzsche, while accepting it is 'indisputable … that the only subject-matter of Greek tragedy, in its earliest form, was the suffering of Dionysus', draws the opposite conclusion (BT 10). For him, the 'solace' to be derived from Dionysian tragedy is 'an overwhelming feeling … that in the ground of things … life is indestructibly mighty and pleasurable' (BT 7). What thus becomes clear is that 'the unequivocal and explicit rejection of Schopenhauer's aesthetics found in Nietzsche's later texts is already apparent in [*The Birth of Tragedy*]'.[3]

Consequently, implicit to *The Birth of Tragedy* is a repudiation of the Schopenhauerian view of existence as an arena of hopeless suffering. And although Schopenhauer escapes direct attack in the original edition of *The Birth of Tragedy*, in a revised edition, published in 1886, Nietzsche adds a new opening section entitled 'An Attempt at Self-Criticism', in which he openly criticizes Schopenhauer's pessimism. Here, Nietzsche laments his previous use of a Schopenhauerian idiom, admitting that he lacked the 'courage' to 'permit' himself a language of his own (BT, 'SC' 6). More significant still, he makes clear that what is at the heart of the work is a form of pessimism that is the polar opposite of Schopenhauer's: namely, 'a pessimism of

[1] Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, vol. 2, p. 605.
[2] Sallis, *Crossings*, pp. 98-9.
[3] Urpeth, "A 'Pessimism of Strength'", p. 142.

strength [*Pessimismus der Stärke*]', which comes from 'overflowing health, from an *abundance* of existence' (BT, 'SC' 1). For Nietzsche, Greek tragedy had nothing to do with a doctrine of resignation, still less a denial of life. On the contrary, by means of tragic art, the Greeks triumphed over their suffering, for the essence of Greek tragedy is the Dionysian, an experience that has its basis 'in *desire and delight* … in an excess of plenitude' (BT, 'SC' 4). Nietzsche's pessimism of strength is thus a radical transformation of Schopenhauerian pessimism, where suffering is conceived not as a discouragement to life but as an inducement. To gain insight into this re-imagined pessimism, we must look to 'Schopenhauer as Educator', for it is here not only that, as already stated, Nietzsche first begins to distance himself from Schopenhauer but it is also here that we can see the first flowering of his own counter-ideal. For a remarkable feature of 'Schopenhauer as Educator' is that, in a work supposedly dedicated to the example of Arthur Schopenhauer, it is another philosopher, Michel de Montaigne, whom Nietzsche offers as the thinker most worthy of respect and deserving of admiration.[4]

'Schopenhauer as Educator' and Montaigne

Generally, Nietzsche reserves unequivocal praise for pre-Socratic philosophers. Searching his oeuvre, one would be hard pressed to find equally complimentary statements on more recent thinkers (excepting Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, perhaps). In that context alone, Nietzsche's comments in 'Schopenhauer as Educator' regarding Montaigne merit some attention:

> That such a man wrote has truly augmented the joy of living on this earth. Since getting to know this freest and mightiest of souls, I … have come to feel … as soon as I glance at him I grow a leg or a wing. … If I were set the task, I could endeavour to make myself at home in the world with him (SE 2).

[4] The first mention of Montaigne in the Nietzsche corpus is in a letter to his family, December 30, 1870, where he reveals that Cosima Wagner has given him a 'handsome' edition of the complete *Essays* as a Christmas present, and admits to admiring Montaigne a great deal (KSB 3, 116). Thomas Brobjer speculates that Nietzsche began reading the *Essays* in 1871 (*Nietzsche's Philosophical Context*, p. 57). Yet Williams is surely right to suggest that 'Cosima's present of Montaigne … seems to show that Nietzsche was interested in the [*Essays*] some time before, but it is unlikely that he read them before his arrival in Basle [1869]' (*Nietzsche and the French*, p. 17).

The significance of this statement, however, goes well beyond the mere fact that Nietzsche is being unusually appreciative of another thinker, particularly bearing in mind that in the preceding sentence he has asserted that he would place Montaigne above Schopenhauer 'in terms of honesty'. And this at a time when, as Williams observes, Nietzsche was still presenting Schopenhauer as his philosophical ideal.[5] Moreover, in the light of Nietzsche's remarks in *Ecce Homo*, concerning how crucial a reading of 'Schopenhauer as Educator' should be for anyone who would want to understand the task he set himself as a philosopher, this tribute to Montaigne must be taken with the utmost seriousness. Accordingly, its importance cannot be overstated, as floating between the lines is a complete rejection of Schopenhauer's vision of existence. Montaigne would have found absurd Schopenhauer's view of human life as a realm of endless suffering, as well as his claim that we would be better off not existing at all. The Montaignean and Schopenhauerian attitudes to life and philosophy stand in direct opposition to each other. After all, in Book I of the *Essays*, Montaigne states that '[a] sad and gloomy mien shows that you have mistaken' the 'address' of philosophy, and furthermore, that the 'most express sign of wisdom is unruffled joy [*jouissance constante*]' (I.26; T160, S180-1 [118-19]). Thus, Nietzsche's admiration for Montaigne announces a reorientation in his thinking.[6] And the fact that he would go so far as to claim that he could make himself 'at home in the world' with the essayist suggests deep reservations toward Schopenhauerian pessimism.

Indeed, if one looks to his earliest writings, it is apparent that, even as Nietzsche wrote *The Birth of Tragedy*, he no longer held to Schopenhauer's pessimistic worldview.[7] Of course, this invites the question of why he would strive to give the contrary impression in his first two published works. In response, Alexander Nehamas suggests that, as regards these early writings, Nietzsche made 'a strategic decision to proceed in a way that would not alienate' his then friend and mentor, Richard Wagner.[8] Wagner, a staunch Schopenhauerian, exerted a huge influence on the young writer Nietzsche—so much so, in fact, that *The Birth of Tragedy* is dedicated to him. Consequently, in 'Schopenhauer as Educator', we can understand Nietzsche as

---

[5] Williams, *Nietzsche and the French*, p. 18.
[6] Brobjer describes Montaigne as an 'alien influence' on Nietzsche during the early 1870's, given his intensive reading of Schopenhauer (*Nietzsche's Philosophical Context*, p. 57).
[7] Nietzsche, *Writings from the Early Notebooks*, pp. 1-8 (October 1867-April 1868: 'On Schopenhauer').
[8] Ibid., "Introduction", p. xxii.

attempting to maintain a tension between two somewhat conflicting aims, that of honoring Schopenhauer's life as a philosopher, while at the same time distancing himself from Schopenhauerian ideas. This he achieves by never overtly criticizing Schopenhauer and extravagantly praising Montaigne. Such a reading is reinforced when Nietzsche goes on to suggest that, along with honesty, 'Schopenhauer has a second quality in common with Montaigne': 'cheerfulness [*Heiterkeit*]' (SE 2). There is a deep irony to this claim. Schopenhauer, the famously morose figure who, in response to Gottfried Leibniz's argument attempting to prove that we exist in 'the best of all possible worlds', develops his own counter argument to the effect that 'this world itself is the worst of all possible worlds', versus Montaigne, the indefatigably buoyant thinker who claims 'the soul which houses philosophy' should have 'a spritely active demeanor and happy welcoming face' (I.26; T160, S180 [119]).[9] Nietzsche's embrace of Montaigne, his talk of the 'joy of living' and 'cheerfulness', indicates a tacit abandonment of the main features of Schopenhauerian pessimism and prefigures the more direct and emphatic repudiation expressed in 'An Attempt at Self-Criticism', by which time Nietzsche had long since broken free from Wagner's intellectual influence.

This is not to argue that Montaigne was the main cause of Nietzsche's turn away from Schopenhauer. Rather, it is to suggest that Nietzsche's reading of the *Essays* gave impetus to a revolution in his thinking that was under way before he came to write 'Schopenhauer as Educator', a revolution he was well aware of, but chose not to explicitly document. In Montaigne, Nietzsche found a new philosophical exemplar, whose celebration of human existence offered encouragement to the Dionysian attitude to life he had espoused in *The Birth of Tragedy*. A note penned in the year before his revised edition of *The Birth of Tragedy* offers some insight. Here, he explains that he saw clearly the 'decline in cheerfulness' precipitated by the advance of German pessimism, but was on guard against it—although he admits this form of 'extreme pessimism … can be perceived here and there in my *Birth of Tragedy*' (KSA 11: 36[49] (WP 91)). Based on his comments in 'Schopenhauer as Educator', one can with some justification view Nietzsche's study of Montaigne as essential to the cultivation of this wariness, and see the Montaignean worldview as providing him with a defence against the world-denying aspects of Schopenhauer's pessimism.[10] Furthermore, his praise of

[9] Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, vol. 2, p. 583.
[10] As Williams puts it, Montaigne's 'action on Nietzsche may be said to start with the emancipation of his thought from the early mystical subservience to Wagner and Schopenhauer' (*Nietzsche and*

Montaigne adds substance to the repeated claim of *Ecce Homo* that in 'Schopenhauer as Educator' it is really a voice antagonistic to Schopenhauer which is given a chance to speak. But much more than this, what we see at work here truly is 'Nietzsche as Educator': he is filling out and developing his own counter ideal to Schopenhauerian pessimism, for what grounds Montaigne's joy in living and Nietzsche's pessimism of strength is the same thing: an affirmation of becoming.

Overcoming of the concept of being

A Heraclitean view of the world pervades the *Essays*. Montaigne is at pains to emphasize 'the uncertainty and mutability of human affairs which lightly shift from state to state, each one different from the other' (I.19; T77, S85, [54]). Like Heraclitus, Montaigne opposes the stability of being to the perpetual flux of becoming. A remarkable passage near the end of 'An apology for Raymond Sebond' is nothing short of a hymn to becoming and a powerful rejection of the concept of being. It is worth quoting from it:

> [T]here is no permanent existence either in our being or in that of objects. … [A]ll mortal things are flowing and rolling ceaselessly [*coulant et roulant sans cesse*]. … We have no communication with Being. … [A]ll things are subject to pass from change to change. … [A]ll things are in a never-ending inconstancy, change and flux (II.12; T586, S680 [455]).

And if this was not enough, Montaigne repudiates the notion of being again in Book III: 'Constancy itself is nothing but a more languid rocking to and fro. … I am not portraying being but becoming' (III.2; T782, S907 [610-11]). Thus, nothing could be plainer than that the *Essays* celebrate transience and becoming. Indeed, Montaigne mocks Heraclitus for his inability to accept and affirm the consequences of his philosophy. Heraclitus, Montaigne tells us, owing to the terrifying uncertainty at the heart of existence 'wore an expression which was always sad, his eyes full of tears' (I.50; T291, S339 [220]). But Montaigne, in contrast, favours the attitude of Democritus,

---

the French, p. 172). Vivarelli suggests that, during the period when Nietzsche was writing *Human, All Too Human* (1878-80), the *Essays* offered an 'antidote' against the effects of Schopenhauerian pessimism, but I want to argue that he self-administered this antidote much earlier, in 1873-4 ("Montaigne und der 'Freie Geist'", p. 100).

who ‘never went out without a mocking and laughing look on his face’ (ibid.). For Montaigne, in the face of the difficulties and sufferings of the human predicament, our ‘own specific property is to be … able to laugh’ (ibid. T292, S340 [221]). Such is the importance that the attitude of Democritus holds for Montaigne he comments on its contrast with Heraclitus again in Book III. Unsurprisingly, then, although having spent a great deal of the *Essays* highlighting the inevitability of change and the pain and uncertainty of human life, in ‘On experience’, his final essay, Montaigne issues no denial of worldly existence. His final remarks are of a piece with the tenor of the rest of his writing: ‘As for me … I love life’ (III.13; T1093, S1264 [854]).

Nietzsche claims that the Schopenhauerian view that ‘this world … is an error … [and] ought not to exist’ stems from a ‘disbelief in becoming, mistrust of becoming, the low valuation of all that becomes’ (KSA 12: 9[60] (WP 585)). Nietzsche acknowledges that a world of becoming—of continual change, decay and death—is one of immense pain and suffering. In this sense, he accepts the premise of Schopenhauer’s pessimism: suffering is inescapable; pain is intrinsic to a world of flux and disorder. But he fundamentally rejects Schopenhauer’s conclusion: ‘I do not account evil and the painful character of existence as a reproach to it’ (KSA 12: 10[118] (WP 382)). In *Twilight of the Idols*, he comments on the traditional ‘hatred’ of philosophers toward the ‘very idea of becoming’, and ridicules their tendency to see ‘Death, change’ and ‘age’ as ‘objections’, ‘refutations even’ (TI 3.1). The form of pessimism that Nietzsche advocates is one that accepts the ubiquity of human suffering in a world of becoming yet possesses the strength to affirm and celebrate existence nonetheless.[11] In the Schopenhauerian conception, the flux of the phenomenal world, the transience of representations, must be denied and transcended. For Nietzsche, Schopenhauer was simply not psychologically strong enough to say yes to life (GS 370). Throughout his writing, Nietzsche associates an unwillingness to affirm becoming with a kind of constitutional weakness, with ‘decadence’. In this way, the basis for Nietzsche’s characterization of Montaigne as the ‘mightiest of souls’ becomes clear: Montaigne has the fortitude to celebrate what Schopenhauer—and most other philosophers in the Western philosophical tradition—could only reproach and deny: Montaigne delighted in, and did not fear, a world of becoming. In ‘An apology for Raymond Sebond’ particularly, Montaigne stresses the limitations and contradictions of sensory perception,

[11] Nietzsche ‘promotes above all, as strongest, the “Dionysian” type that sees and wants a world of becoming’ (Richardson, “Nietzsche on Time and Becoming”, p. 209).

but he eschews any notion of transcendence to a world of being. On the contrary, Montaigne revels in becoming and all that sensory experience has to offer: 'I want to arrest the swiftness of its passing by the swiftness of my capture, compensating for the speed with which it drains away by the intensity of my enjoyment' (III.13; T1092, S1263 [853]). Like Zarathustra, it is as an 'enjoyer of becoming [*Werdelustig*]' that Montaigne loves the earth (Z 2.15).

It is thus reasonable to propose that Nietzsche's subscription to the Montaignean stance toward life acted as a spur to the development of his own conception of a pessimism of strength—or what he would also call '*Dionysian* pessimism' (GS 370). In 'An Attempt at Self-Criticism', Nietzsche makes clear that he believes tragedy to have grown out of the 'severe will to pessimism' of the ancient Hellenes (BT, 'SC' 4). Indeed, in the revised edition to *The Birth of Tragedy*, he changes the full title from *The Birth of Tragedy out of the Spirit of Music* to *The Birth of Tragedy, Or: Hellenism and Pessimism*, so the work would have a more 'unambiguous title' (EH, 'BT' 1). Later in his writing, Nietzsche describes the Dionysian as the 'Saying yes to life, even in its strangest and harshest problems', where one comes to realize in oneself 'the eternal joy in becoming' (TI 10.5). Therefore, 'Schopenhauer as Educator', in offering as an exemplar a philosopher who embraces becoming, can be understood as a continuation and development of a central aim of *The Birth of Tragedy*, what Nietzsche calls his 'first revaluation of all values': the overcoming of the concept of being and a near deification of becoming (ibid.). In *The Birth of Tragedy*, the Dionysian is a celebration of becoming, an experience where one is eternally satisfied with 'incessantly changing appearances' (BT 16). The Dionysian, however, also forces one 'to gaze into the terrors of individual existence', for through Dionysian wisdom we come 'to recognize that everything which comes into being must be prepared for painful destruction' (BT 17).

Becoming and laughter

Jean Starobinski makes a crucial point concerning Montaigne's thoughts on Democritus. It is not simply that Democritus favours an attitude of laughter towards life to one of tears; more precisely, it is that 'Democritus laughs at the world's folly, *but it grieves him just the same* [emphasis added]'.[12] A principal theme of the *Essays* is the natural

[12] Starobinski, *Montaigne in Motion*, p. 5.

disorder and instability of the world—as manifested in Montaigne's extensive discussions of the brutal civil wars he is living through—and the inevitability of pain and suffering, psychological and physical. Montaigne writes movingly of his grief at the loss of his great friend Etienne de La Boétie: 'There is no deed nor thought in which I do not miss him' (I.28; T192, S218 [143]). And the *Essays* catalogue, in detail, the tormenting pain of his body as he experiences the ravages of old-age: 'bodily sufferings … I feel most acutely. … I am wrestling with the worst of all illnesses … the most painful … the most incurable' (II.37; T738, S860 [575-6]). For Montaigne, perhaps the key statement of the *Essays* is his recognition that '[e]verywhere death intermingles and merges with our life'—his articulation of a kind of Dionysian wisdom (III.12; T1082, S1251 [846]). Thus, Montaigne's advocacy of laughter is not based on a denial of suffering or a naively optimistic vision of human existence. On the contrary, Montaigne, like Nietzsche and Schopenhauer, acknowledges suffering as the central feature of our lives. But unlike Schopenhauer and those other thinkers who see 'Death, change' and 'age' as 'objections', Montaigne wins Nietzsche's admiration for his Democritean attitude, the capacity to affirm, time and again—notwithstanding its suffering—the joy and wonder of life.

It is striking that, in the note quoted earlier, where Nietzsche explains how he looked out for the threat of Schopenhauerian pessimism, he also highlights the unique capacity of humans for laughter. Nietzsche goes much further than Montaigne, however, in offering this speculation: 'Perhaps I know best why man alone laughs: he alone suffers so deeply that he *had* to invent laughter' (KSA 11: 36[49] (WP 91)). Nevertheless, in either case, laughter is taken to be the most natural and appropriate response to the uncertainty, ambiguity and contingency of the human condition—and everything else that follows from existence in a world of becoming.[13] Nietzsche proposes that, in contrast to those who harbour only 'contempt … for all that perishes, changes, varies', one should extract happiness from 'change and destruction' (KSA 12: 9[60] (WP 585)). Likewise, Montaigne, who holds that '[i]t is normal to experience change and decay' (I.20; T89, S101 [63]), rebukes the individual of 'a morose and gloomy mind', who clings to life's 'misfortunes and feeds on them' (III.5; T822, S953 [642]). More conspicuous still, the idea of laughter as a response to becoming is at the

[13] Indeed, in the thought of both thinkers we find a full 'recognition of the value of humour for life' (Whitlock, *Returning to Sils Maria*, p. 267). Advocates of laughter, they allow comic mockery and sarcasm a central place in their writings, and if Montaigne makes frequent use of the humorous anecdote, Nietzsche shows a partiality for 'jokes' (see Lampert, "Nietzsche's Best Jokes").

core of Nietzsche's conception of the overhuman and Zarathustra's teaching to humanity in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Significantly, in the final section of 'An Attempt at Self-Criticism', emphasizing the centrality of laughter to the existential attitude of Dionysian pessimism, Nietzsche quotes a passage from *Zarathustra* that expounds on the sacredness of laughter. Dubbing Zarathustra a 'Dionysian fiend', Nietzsche lets him speak: 'Laughter I have pronounced holy; you superior humans, *learn* from me—to laugh' (Z 4.13.20).[14] Montaigne would have found such a teaching deeply appealing, since, for him, the supreme 'task' of philosophy is 'to make the tempests of the soul serene and to teach hunger and fever how to laugh' (I.26; T160, S181 [119]). Hence, Nietzsche's tribute to Montaigne in 'Schopenhauer as Educator' does not constitute, like some passages of *The Birth of Tragedy*, idle remarks full of 'the errors of youth', but points directly forward to vital aspects of his mature philosophy (BT, 'SC' 2).

The innocence of becoming

For Nietzsche, Dionysian pessimism represents a progression from and deepening of Schopenhauerian pessimism. As we have seen, Schopenhauer's pessimism is not based on some hedonistic calculus, where the pains of human life are determined to outweigh the pleasures. Rather, Schopenhauer's pessimism is a 'moralistic' pessimism, a condemnation of existence as a whole: life has no value, we would be better off not existing, since suffering is inescapable. According to this kind of pessimism, the world, based on a particular understanding of what is good or bad, just or unjust, must be judged negatively, because human existence fails to meet a certain standard of happiness, a standard that any worthwhile existence should attain. Again, Nietzsche's repudiation of this kind of moralistic interpretation of existence has its beginnings in *The Birth of Tragedy*, but as before, it is in 'Schopenhauer as Educator' where he first addresses the moralistic basis of Schopenhauer's pessimism directly and issues a mild yet clear rebuke, suggesting that Schopenhauer had envisioned 'a dreadful scene in a supraterrestrial court in which all life, even the highest, had been weighed and found wanting' (SE 7). In the Nietzschean conception, what really is at work behind

[14] As John Lippitt observes, the 'idea of "learning to laugh"' in Part IV of *Zarathustra* suggests the '*reflective* appropriation of laughter', which must be distinguished from the more 'spontaneous' laughter of Book III, the 'ecstatic laughter of the shepherd': 'a laughter that was no human laughter' (Z 3.2.2) ("Laughter", pp. 106-7). While we find no evidence of the latter kind of laughter in the *Essays*, Montaigne certainly exemplifies the former.

Schopenhauer's pessimism is an insidious 'revenge' against existence. In *The Gay Science*, he claims that Schopenhauer's pessimism represents an 'impoverishment of life', the reaction of a suffering individual who takes 'revenge on all things by … branding *his* image on them, the image of *his* torture' (GS 370). By the time we get to *Twilight of the Idols*, Nietzsche is offering a more mordant analysis: 'Instead of naively saying "I am not worth anything anymore", the moral lie in the decadent's mouth says "nothing is worth anything,—*life* isn't worth anything"' (TI 9.35).

Dionysian pessimism is the antithesis of this 'moral lie', eschewing any judgment on life as a whole—the Dionysian is a celebration of life, even at its most terrible—and is indicative of 'a *superabundance of life* [*Überfülle des Lebens*]' (GS 370). In 'An Attempt at Self-Criticism', Nietzsche claims that *The Birth of Tragedy* 'betrays a spirit which will defend itself one day, whatever the danger, against the *moral* interpretation and significance of existence' (BT, 'SC' 5). For, the disorder and suffering of a world of becoming can only be impugned in the context of an imagined world of being, but if one truly affirms becoming, there is simply no standard against which the world can be judged and found wanting, and the contradiction that Schopenhauer sees at the heart of existence, our doomed, Tantalus-like fate to remain eternally unsatisfied, amounts for Nietzsche to nothing more than the moral projection of his own suffering onto the world at large. Nietzsche's Dionysian pessimism deepens Schopenhauer's pessimism in the sense that it represents the 'disintegration of the last consolation': the consolation that the circumstances of the human predicament are somehow wrong and indecent and that one can take revenge against life, win a kind of victory, through a rejection and denial of the will to life (KSA 10: 8[14] (WP 417)). Thus the aim of Nietzsche's Dionysian pessimism is to 'restore innocence to becoming', to no longer view existence as an error, or punishment, and therefore worthy of condemnation. From the standpoint of a Dionysian pessimist, existence is blameless: 'one cannot judge, measure, compare the whole, to say nothing of denying it!' (KSA 12: 5[108] (WP 765))

Nietzsche's thoughts on the 'innocence of becoming' and the absurdity of holding existence in disrepute are in conspicuous agreement with the *Essays*. Montaigne insists that 'the opinion which holds our life in contempt is a ridiculous one' (II.3; T334, S397 [254]). And like Nietzsche, he associates such an opinion with a contemptible form of suffering: 'it is unnatural that we should despise ourselves. … [I]t is a sickness peculiar to Man [*une maladie particuliere*] to hate and despise himself' (ibid.). For Montaigne, what prompts a damning judgment on our existence is a denial of who and

what we are, a denial of becoming. Humanity's peculiar sickness thus represents a longing for stability, order, constancy, for being, a 'vain desire which makes us want to be other than we are' (ibid.). Montaigne also questions the coherence of the notion of a value standard by which to judge human life as a whole, mockingly suggesting that only another 'creature' who enjoys an existence 'richer and nobler than we do' could possibly be in a position to criticize (ibid.). He thus abstains from pronouncing a judgment on existence, either positive or negative, recognizing that the question of the value of existence has no answer; the value of life cannot be evaluated. Montaigne's response to the question of the value of existence is this: 'When I dance, I dance. When I sleep, I sleep' (III.13; T1087, S1258 [850]). And in the face of becoming and the decay that time has wrought on his mind and body, he finds life to be 'of both great account and delightful' (ibid. T1092, S1263 [853]). These are not the words of a decadent, understood in the Nietzschean sense. Here is manifest the 'superabundance of life' that is the essence of Nietzsche's Dionysian pessimism. Hence, for David Molner, what Nietzsche most admired about Montaigne and his 'smiling embrace of life' was that an intimacy with suffering led him 'to a love of life rather than a morality of *ressentiment*'.[15] Montaigne, who Nietzsche places above Schopenhauer in terms of honesty, rejects the 'moral lie' of the decadent and refuses to translate morality into reality. The kind of Schopenhauerian moral interpretation of the world, in which 'life *must* constantly and inevitably be proved wrong … [and] felt to be inherently unworthy, undeserving of desire' is repudiated in every line of the *Essays* (BT, 'SC' 5). So, for Nietzsche, Montaigne not only shares his Heraclitean denial of being but he also offers unambiguous support in his emerging stand against the moralistic interpretation of existence.

In *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche makes the following statement to his fellow 'free spirits': 'lest we lose that *freedom over things* that our ideal demands, it would be a *relapse* for us, in our irritable honesty, to get completely caught up in morality' (GS 107). This point is amplified by a note written two years later, in 1885, where he comments on his 'feeling of freedom' at no longer being 'harnessed' to a moral interpretation of the world, to the notion that 'the concepts "reward" and "punishment" … reside in the essence of things' (KSA 12: 2[206] (WP 789)). *Ecce Homo* also describes the '*great* freedom' of 'Schopenhauer as Educator', which can now be

[15] Molner, "The Influence of Montaigne on Nietzsche", pp. 84-6.

understood in a double sense: firstly, in the sense that Nietzsche is beginning to speak in his own voice, free of Schopenhauer, and secondly, in the sense that he has broken free from a condemnatory vision of the world. Again, in this regard, Nietzsche's comments on Montaigne are instructive, for he characterizes Montaigne not only as the 'mightiest of souls' but also the 'freest': Montaigne possesses both the strength to affirm becoming and the freedom to refrain from attributing metaphysical significance to the pain and suffering that are its natural consequences. Both thinkers seek to overcome and move beyond the question of the value of existence: the only credible response they see is to validate and honor life.

New exemplar

Nietzsche states that when he abandoned his allegiance to Schopenhauer and ceased to be a pessimist in the Schopenhauerian sense, he turned his 'will to health, to *life*' into his 'philosophy' (EH 1.2). Furthermore, he claims that his 'instinct for self-restoration *prohibited* any philosophy of poverty or discouragement' (ibid.). Thus we can understand the *Essays* as providing the necessary treatment—in the form of a philosophy that promotes a love for and a delight in life—for the 'long period of illness' that he endured as a disciple of Schopenhauerian pessimism.[16] But Montaigne does more for Nietzsche than merely aid him in his overcoming of the sickness of pessimism: by encouraging his escape from Schopenhauer, Montaigne becomes a new exemplar for Nietzsche, an exemplar who confirms the possibility of a different kind of pessimism, a Dionysian pessimism, the affirmation and celebration of life despite its suffering; and going beyond this, in terms of Nietzsche's middle and late works, he becomes an exemplar as a moral psychologist (Chapter 2) and ethical naturalist (Chapters 3 & 4).

James Conant, in his study of 'Schopenhauer as Educator', devotes some attention to the Nietzsche-Emerson relationship, noting the extent to which Emerson's writing 'haunts' the work, and how 'Schopenhauer as Educator' ends by praising Emerson.[17] To explain 'the pervasiveness of Emerson's presence' in an essay that 'bears Schopenhauer's name', Conant suggests that we should understand Schopenhauer as a

[16] It seems that, throughout his life, Nietzsche turned to Montaigne in times of psychological distress. In a letter to Peter Gast in 1887 he states: 'I was reading Montaigne to extricate myself from a morosely gloomy and irritated mood' (KSB 8, 940) (Middleton, *Selected Letters of Friedrich Nietzsche*, pp. 272-3).

[17] Conant, "Nietzsche's Perfectionism", p. 233.

teacher who Nietzsche 'has outgrown', while recognizing Emerson 'as an exemplar that continues to function as one of the authors current exemplars' (ibid.). Of course, such an argument applies with even greater force to Montaigne, whose writing not only haunts 'Schopenhauer as Educator' (as we shall see in the next section) but who we also find explicitly held up as representing a philosophical ideal that supersedes the example of Schopenhauer. And as Berry suggests, the 'juxtaposition' of Schopenhauer and Montaigne in this work tells us not only that Nietzsche is reading both figures 'comparatively' but also that 'Montaigne surpasses Schopenhauer in some of the very respects in which Schopenhauer has been a role model for the young Nietzsche'.[18] In addition, Nietzsche's 'praise' of Emerson—amounting to no more than an approving quotation from 'On Circles'—is mild indeed, as compared with his remarkable tribute to Montaigne. Moreover, the *Essays* proceed to have a substantial impact on Nietzsche's thought moving into his middle works and beyond: Brobjer, when surveying Nietzsche's reading and intellectual influences, lists Montaigne as one of 'the writers to whom Nietzsche most often, and most approvingly', refers to in his published works.[19] In fact, Montaigne's significance for Nietzsche extends even to the fundamental issue of his conception of the philosopher and the philosophical life, the subject to which I now turn.

[18] Berry, "The Pyrrhonian Revival in Montaigne and Nietzsche", p. 503.
[19] Brobjer, *Nietzsche's Philosophical Context*, p. 8. All in all, there are 13 direct references to Montaigne in Nietzsche's published works. This may seem slight, but the number of explicit references to the *Essays* belies the true extent of the Montaignean influence, which one can only begin to grasp by considering the countless (unacknowledged) restatements of passages from the *Essays* to be found especially in Nietzsche's middle works. There are also a further 29 references to Montaigne in Nietzsche's unpublished notes, as well as 10 references in his correspondence.

Section II: Philosophy as a Way of Life

The courageous visibility of the philosophical life

Why, if he has jettisoned the central doctrines of Schopenhauer's philosophy, does Nietzsche offer Schopenhauer as an exemplar to his contemporaries? In what sense can Schopenhauer be a guide to the renewal of German culture, if his romantic pessimism is to be rejected? Moreover, how is it possible for Nietzsche to put forward *both* Schopenhauer and Montaigne—philosophers with completely divergent views on human existence—as examples of the highest humanity? The answer to these questions is to be found in the singular conception of the philosopher that Nietzsche outlines in 'Schopenhauer as Educator', a conception that substantially informs the rest of his work. For what is clear is that Nietzsche rejects what has become the conventional view of philosophy as a merely theoretical discipline divorced from, and of no relevance to, the pressing concerns of daily life. Rather, in 'Schopenhauer as Educator', Nietzsche promotes a distinctly Hellenistic conception of philosophy, where philosophy is understood less as the formulation of abstract theoretical systems than as a practical activity grounded in lived experience and influencing all aspects of life.[20] According to the Greco-Roman model, philosophy is an art of living devoted to the transformation of one's character, and as Pierre Hadot explains, an individual is regarded as a philosopher 'not because he develops a philosophical discourse, but because he lives philosophically'.[21]

As a consequence, in 'Schopenhauer as Educator', Nietzsche feels free to distance himself from the essentials of Schopenhauerian pessimism, while at the same time praising 'the courageous visibility' of Schopenhauer's 'philosophical life' (SE 3). And so, that 'Schopenhauer as Educator' contains little reference to Schopenhauer's philosophical ideas is not simply because such ideas have by this time become unpalatable to Nietzsche, but also has to do with the radical conception of the philosopher he is developing: instead of an analysis of the cogency of Schopenhauer's arguments, we are offered insight into his character and psychology—as well as some

[20] Conant is thus correct to argue that 'Schopenhauer as Educator' is the work where Nietzsche first urges that 'the formation of character (rendering oneself capable of exercising practical wisdom)—which he identifies as formerly having been a central preoccupation of Hellenistic and Roman philosophy—once again be restored to its rightful place at the center of philosophy' ("Nietzsche's Perfectionism", p. 220).

[21] Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, p. 27.

biographical details. Furthermore, even though, as I have shown in the previous section, 'Schopenhauer as Educator' reveals Nietzsche's embrace of the Montaignean attitude to life, Montaigne, too, is praised not in terms of the content of his *Essays* but for his exceptional character—his psychological strength and honesty. In this way, 'Schopenhauer as Educator' constitutes a vigorous endorsement of the Greco-Roman model of philosophy:

> I profit from a philosopher only insofar as he can be an example. … But this example must be supplied by his outward life and not merely in his books—in the way, that is, in which the philosophers of Greece taught, through their bearing … and their morals, rather than by what they said, let alone what they wrote (SE 3).

Montaigne could hardly have put the point better himself, such is its striking affinity with many passages in the *Essays*. Like Nietzsche, Montaigne admits that he considers 'the lives … of the great teachers of mankind no less carefully than their ideas and doctrines' (II.10; T396, S467 [303]). And he comes to a similar assessment of the sages of Greek antiquity, insisting that, while these philosophers were undoubtedly 'great in learning', they were 'greater still in activities of every kind. … [U]nderstanding had indeed wondrously enriched their hearts and minds' (I.25; T134, S152 [99]). Time and again, Montaigne affirms the Hellenistic conception of the philosopher and casts his own philosophic enterprise as following in the Greco-Roman tradition: 'All my effort has gone into the forming of my way of life: that is my trade and vocation [*mon métier et mon ouvrage*]' (II.37; T764, S885 [596]). Although the *Essays* testify to a profound erudition, Montaigne's disdain for mere bookishness and the pedantic accumulation of knowledge unaccompanied by practical wisdom is palpable throughout. He continuously underscores the fact that any insight his book contains is ground out of concrete, lived experience. One of the more conspicuous examples of this is when, during a 'disturbance' of the civil wars, Montaigne suffers a fall from his horse, after which he remains unconscious for several hours. In the *Essays*, this episode provides the occasion for a discussion of, among other things, consciousness, the nature of death, and the workings of memory. Montaigne rounds off his description of the incident with the following remark: 'This account of so unimportant an event is pointless enough but for the instruction I drew from it for my own purposes' (II.6; T357, S423-4 [272]). Thus,

near the end of the *Essays*, a work dedicated to cataloging and distilling much of the learning of antiquity, Montaigne can make the extraordinary yet defensible claim that his 'philosophy lies in action, in natural and present practice, and but little in ratiocination [*peu en fantasie*]' (III.5; T820, S950 [639-40]).[22]

Montaigne's *Essays* represent a remarkable engagement with Greco-Roman thought, one of the most celebrated and influential in the history of Western philosophy. Moreover, Montaigne understands his own philosophy as an effort to deepen and develop that heritage—even though he retains an independent voice, and attacks notions sacred to Greek and Roman philosophy. He sees himself essentially as a philosopher writing—and more importantly living—in the manner of a Hellenistic philosopher: 'I seek only that branch of learning which deals with knowing myself and which teaches one how to live and die well' (II.10; T388, S459 [297]). Therefore, in 'Schopenhauer as Educator', when Nietzsche, through an appropriation of vital aspects of Hellenistic thought, comes to elaborate his own distinctive conception of the philosopher, Montaigne stands as the preeminent precursor.[23] To be sure, Nietzsche's study of Montaigne is crucial to his abandonment of Schopenhauerian pessimism, though more significant perhaps is Montaigne's influence on Nietzsche's thinking as regards the essence of the philosophical life. A great deal of 'Schopenhauer as Educator' resonates with Greco-Roman thought, and particularly with Stoicism, with its themes of self-cultivation, freedom, autonomy, and independence. Nietzsche feels at home with Montaigne because the *Essays* so clearly anticipate key elements of his own philosophy: the *Essays* reveal, in a most vivid way, a philosopher in the Hellenistic mould assimilating the central elements of the Classical tradition in the process of advancing his own, original understanding of how to live philosophically. Hence, Nietzsche's appreciation of the philosophers of antiquity and his understanding of philosophy as a way of life is filtered through the prism of the *Essays*.[24]

---

[22] Frame translates this as 'little in fancy'. Perhaps Screech opts for 'ratiocination' here because Montaigne often blurs the distinction between reason and the imagination.

[23] 'Hadot has repeatedly pointed to Montaigne's *Essays* … as embodying the ancient exercise of philosophy, referring to the *Essays* as "the breviary of ancient philosophy, the manual of the art of living"' (Davidson, "Introduction", *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, p. 33 (the Hadot quote is from "Émerveillements", in *La Bibliothèque imaginaire du Collège de France*, Paris 1990, p. 122).

[24] Michael Ure, in his examination of Nietzsche's appropriation of Greco-Roman thought, focuses on the middle works—although he concedes that Conant makes a 'compelling case' for dating Nietzsche's turn to Hellenistic conceptions of self-cultivation as early as 'Schopenhauer as Educator' (*Nietzsche's Therapy*, p. 53n98). He thus fails to appreciate the importance of the *Essays* ('the breviary of ancient philosophy') for Nietzsche's conception of philosophy as an art of living.

Given that philosophers in antiquity were considered such based mainly on their character and distinctive mode of existence—as opposed to their corpus of written material or public lectures—a marked feature of philosophical works in the Greco-Roman tradition is the prevalence of biographical details. So, for instance, in *On the Nature of the Universe,* Lucretius sprinkles his defense of Epicurean philosophy with insights about the life of Epicurus, and in Epictetus' *Discourses*, a tract admonishing its readers to adopt the Stoic way of life, references to the lives of Socrates and Chrysippus figure prominently. Thus, Nietzsche, writing in a similar vein and explicitly taking Hellenistic philosophy as his inspiration, has passages of 'Schopenhauer as Educator' take, in a slight parody of the genre, the form of a potted biography: we learn about Schopenhauer's 'pretentious' mother, the 'republican character' of his father, and his time working in a 'merchant's office' (SE 7). We are informed of these aspects of Schopenhauer's life, Nietzsche tells us, in order that we may 'see through his book[s] and … imagine the living man' (SE 2). But Nietzsche also describes these biographical details as 'superficial', for in revealing the living man what Nietzsche is actually trying to stress is Schopenhauer's radical independence. Unlike a philosopher of the ilk of Kant, who 'clung to his university' and 'submitted to its regulations', Schopenhauer 'had little patience with the scholarly castes' and 'strove to be independent of state and society' (SE 3). For Nietzsche, the condition under which the philosophical genius of Schopenhauer flourished was 'freedom and freedom again: that wonderful and perilous element in which the Greek philosophers were able to grow up' (SE 8).

Nietzsche's characterization of Schopenhauer is strongly reminiscent of the literature in the Greco-Roman tradition, where the mode of life of the philosopher is often depicted as a journey toward autonomy, self-mastery, and freedom; indeed, in the *Discourses*, Epictetus describes the Stoic way of life as one in which, 'every day', ideas are put into action 'that protect against attachment to externals such as individual people, places or institutions'.[25] In Nietzsche view, it was the freedom and independence of the Greek philosophers that enabled them to be exemplars for their contemporaries, and it is Schopenhauer's complete detachment from popular culture and the institutions of the state—whether financial, educational or political—that sets him up as the ideal 'educator' for his age. Schopenhauer's 'dignified distance' from the corrupting forces of 'money-making' and politics, his freedom from the 'zeitgeist', gives him a unique

[25] Epictetus, *Discourses,* p. 114.

insight into his own time and culture, such that in the 'mirror' of his life and writings all the insufficiencies of his age are disclosed: 'Through Schopenhauer we are all *able* to educate ourselves *against* our age—because through him we possess the advantage of really *knowing* this age' (SE 4). But of course, Montaigne, no less than Schopenhauer, holds a mirror up to his age, particularly the ruling class: a constant but unstated aim of the *Essays* is to ironically reveal the absurdities and shortcomings of the French aristocracy. Thus, always in the background of this talk of Schopenhauer's independence is the implicit presence of the 'freest and mightiest of souls', Montaigne.

Montaigne, famously, retired to the refuge of his estate a few years prior to beginning his *Essays*, having become disillusioned with political life. He was, he states, 'determined to devote myself to spending … life … quietly and privately; it seemed that the greatest favor I could do for my mind was to leave it … caring for itself, concerned only for itself' (I.8; T34, S31 [21]). Montaigne's quest to retain his independence, amid frequent calls for him to return to political affairs, is a central feature of the *Essays*. As with Nietzsche, the mode of life of the philosophers of ancient Greece is Montaigne's model: their 'inimitable' way of life was one of continuous self-care and self-study; they lived 'above the common concern' and were 'contemptuous of public duties' (I.25; T134, S152 [99]). What Montaigne seeks above all else is freedom, freedom from all the 'traps'—familial, social, or political—that could dissipate his energies and take him away from himself. At times, his desire for freedom is expressed in the language of Stoicism. Admitting an Epictetean fear of attachment to 'external things', Montaigne claims that the solitude he seeks involves 'fleeing like death from all slavery and obligation, and running away … from … the throng of affairs' (III.3; T801, S928 [625]). Liberated from social and political commitments and ensconced in his tower, Montaigne achieves the critical distance necessary to dissect the culture of his contemporaries. What he finds is mindless 'ambition', 'vanity', 'ostentation', 'artificiality', concluding that 'our manners are corrupt in the extreme and wondrously inclined to get worse' (II.17; T639, S745 [497]). But perhaps the most salient parallel between Schopenhauer (as Nietzsche understands him) and Montaigne is intellectual independence. Like Schopenhauer, Montaigne was no professional scholar.[26] The *Essays* reveal nothing but

[26] It must have impressed Nietzsche greatly that Montaigne was 'a gentleman not a scholar … a man who knew the ways of diplomacy and the realities of the battlefield' (Screech, "Introduction", *The Complete Essays*, p. xviii). In the *Essays*, we are seldom offered glimpses of Montaigne alone in his tower, reading or writing. Rather, more often than not, we see him on horseback, in the midst of a skirmish of the civil wars, or out on the hunt; at any rate, engaged in strenuous physical activity.

contempt for the Scholasticism that dominated the universities of his day and his criticism of the medieval scholar is trenchant. In fact, the degree to which Nietzsche's polemic against 'mere scholars' in 'Schopenhauer in Educator' takes its cue from the *Essays* is remarkable.

Education

Montaigne's attack on the medieval scholar is the main topic of two successive essays: 'On schoolmasters' learning' and 'On educating children'. But the issue of education is one he returns to repeatedly in the *Essays*. In line with his conception of philosophy as a way of life, Montaigne sees education as less an exercise in intellectual understanding than a practical activity devoted to the cultivation of character and the formation of judgment. He insists that we should 'place character and intelligence before knowledge', as 'book-learning should serve as an ornament not as a foundation' (I.26; T149, S168 [110]; ibid. T151, S171 [112]). For this reason, he regards Scholasticism as an absurdity, with its theoretical abstraction and devotion to conceptual analysis based on Aristotelian definitions. In contrast, philosophy, on Montaigne's account, should be an art of living, or what he describes as 'a continuous training of the soul [*une continuelle exercitation de l'ame*]' (ibid. T142, S161 [105]). Namely, a lived ethic that shapes our life and influences all aspects of our being: 'Our education has taught us the definitions, divisions and subdivisions of virtue without any concern for establishing between us and it any practice of familiarity or personal intimacy' (II.17; T644, S750 [501]).[27] As Montaigne would have it, the medieval scholar is a pitiable figure—learned, but devoid of any true understanding. They possess only the most superficial understanding of themselves and how to live, and their exceptional erudition in no way informs the manner of their life: 'Take an arts don; converse with him. Why is he incapable of making us feel the excellence of his "arts"' (III.8; T905, S1050 [707]). For Montaigne, in effect, what these scholars are really doing is 'hiding behind other men's shadows'

This is precisely Nietzsche's kind of philosopher: 'We are not among those who have ideas only from books, stimulated by books—our habit is to think outdoors, walking, leaping, jumping' (GS 366). And for his part, Montaigne insists that he 'would rather be a good [horseman] than a good logician [translation altered]' (III.9; T929, S1077 [726]). In this way, both thinkers promote an art of living that is infused by the wisdom of the body (see Chapter 3, Section III).

[27] 'The basic philosophy course taught in most European universities in Montaigne's time consisted principally in a training in grammar and logic, set in the context of an Aristotelian classification of knowledge' (Mclean, "Montaigne and the truth of the schools", p. 145).

(ibid.). They have studied the opinions of the great thinkers of antiquity, but have failed to 'transmute' all that learning into themselves (I.25; T137, S155 [101]). In this way, for the medieval scholar, philosophy is an adjunct to life rather than at its centre, and learning is an academic exercise inconsequential to lived experience. But Montaigne is after wisdom and not learning, for, as he succinctly puts it, '[l]earned we may be with another man's learning: we can only be wise with wisdom of our own' (ibid.).

In 'Schopenhauer as Educator', Nietzsche's polemic against the German university system follows a strikingly similar, if more caustic, line. His contempt for the so-called philosophers of his day is similarly based on a Hellenistic conception of the philosopher: 'A scholar can never become a philosopher … a philosopher is … not merely a great thinker but also a real human being … because most of his instruction he has to acquire out of himself' (SE 7). For both Montaigne and Nietzsche, philosophy is a journey to self-knowledge, self-knowledge won through experience and involving the whole of one's being, not merely the intellect.[28] Nietzsche sees the twin scourges of the German intellectual landscape as Hegelianism and an unhealthy enthusiasm for science, both thought systems based on 'inhuman abstraction'. Indeed, Nietzsche praises Schopenhauer for his 'antique attitude towards philosophy', which prevented him from 'becoming enmeshed in abstract scholasticism' (SE 3). For Nietzsche, the excellence of the arts don of his day is also in question: 'Classical antiquity … has ceased to produce an exemplary effect; a fact demonstrated by its disciples, who are truly not exemplary' (SE 8). He finds the lives of German scholars preposterous because their thought bears not the slightest relation to their life, amounting to no more than spouting the views of the sages of the past. In consequence, these scholars have become 'crookbacked and humped', and spend their time, akin to the Montaignean scholars who hide in the shadows of greater individuals, 'consuming the moral capital we have inherited from our forefathers' (SE 2). When philosophy is understood as a lived practice, predicated on self-knowledge, to live by the thought of another is merely an ersatz version of the

[28] And this journey to self-knowledge is an extremely testing one: 'It is a thorny undertaking—more than it looks—to follow so roaming a course as that of our minds, to penetrate its dark depths and its inner recesses' (II.6; T358, S424 [273]). Paraphrasing the above, Nietzsche writes: 'How can man know himself? He is a thing dark and veiled. … [I]t is a painful and dangerous undertaking … to tunnel into oneself and to force one's way down into the shaft of one's being [*in den Schacht seines Wesens*] by the nearest path' (SE 1). Yet, at the same time, 'everything bears witness to what we are, our friendships and enmities, our glance and the clasp of our hands' (ibid.); or, as Montaigne phrases it, '[a]nything we do reveals us. … [E]very constituent of a man, each occupation, tells us about him and reveals him as any other' (I.50; T290-1, S338-9 [219-20]).

philosophical life. For, by allowing 'ourselves to lean so heavily on other men's arms', Montaigne explains, 'we destroy our own force' (I.25; T137, S155 [101]).

That Nietzsche and Montaigne seem to be speaking with one voice on the nature of the scholar is explained by an otherwise apparently incidental remark Nietzsche makes near the end of section six of 'Schopenhauer as Educator'. Here we are informed that the German system of education 'has its roots in the Middle Ages', and what is more, its ideal 'is actually the production of the medieval scholar'. The agreement between them in this regard becomes even more apparent when one considers their respective verdicts on institutionalized philosophy, as practiced according to the medieval scholastic model. Whereas Montaigne proposes that philosophy now 'means something fantastical and vain, without value or usefulness', Nietzsche sees in German education nothing but 'a feeble phantom bearing the name of philosophy, a scholarly lecture-hall wisdom … something ludicrous [*eine lächerliche Sache*]' (I.26; T159, S180 [118]; SE 8). Nietzsche completes his denunciation of institutionalized philosophy by rhetorically asking 'why it is that no great general or statesman at present has anything to do with it' (ibid.). The answer he provides is that where once, in ancient times, philosophy was a 'source of the heroic', for his contemporaries philosophy has become 'a matter of complete indifference' (ibid.). Yet again, the sentiment expressed here inescapably calls to mind a passage from the *Essays*, in which Montaigne endeavors to bring home the triviality of scholastic philosophy:

> Aristotle never spent much of the time of his great pupil Alexander on the art of syllogisms: he taught him, rather, sound precepts concerning valor, prowess, greatness of soul. … With such armory he sent him still a child to conquer the empire of the world (I.26; T163, S183 [121]).[29]

Finally, both agree that many scholars have simply taken up the wrong profession. Montaigne laments that these individuals 'could have been good famers, good

[29] Montaigne was no general, but he was a statesman, and 'on matters of war and politics … [he] was listened to throughout Europe as a gentleman who knew from experience, and not from book-learning alone, what he was a talking about' (Screech, "Introduction", *The Complete Essays*, p. xliv). David Quint details how, in January, 1590, Montaigne wrote to King Henry IV (formerly Henri of Navarre, at whose court Montaigne had been a courtier more than 20 years earlier), taking 'on the role of royal counselor', to offer advice on how the religious wars might be brought to an end. Hence, in the case of Montaigne, we have a philosopher-statesman, whose wisdom was of profound practical import, perhaps helping to guide the direction of French history (*Montaigne and the Quality of Mercy*, pp. 141-4).

merchants, good craftsmen' (III.8; T910, S1055 [711]), while Nietzsche maintains that, if career philosophers ceased to be 'enticed' by salaries, 'one will become a parson, another a schoolmaster … [and] the most sensible of them … take up the plough' (SE 8).

All this is not to deny that a great deal of the insight that 'Schopenhauer as Educator' offers into the 19th century German scholar is distinctly Nietzschean. As he states in *Ecce Homo*, it is in 'Schopenhauer as Educator'—and going beyond anything contained in the *Essays*—that 'the brutal psychology of the scholar' comes to light (EH, 'UM' 3). In section six, Nietzsche catalogues the 'qualities that are prominently displayed in the man of learning': among them (he analyzes ten different qualities), 'probity and a sense for simplicity', 'poverty of feeling and aridity', and 'the motive of breadwinning'. Furthermore, 'Schopenhauer as Educator' is to a considerable extent concerned with a critique of the scholarly pursuit of science—if undertaken to the exclusion of all other considerations: 'As long as what is meant by culture is essentially the promotion of science, culture will pass the … individual by with a pitiless coldness' (SE 6). Nonetheless, as in the case of Nietzsche's discussion of the independence of the genuine philosopher, behind his analysis of the German education system stands the undoubted presence of Montaigne. Much of his thinking on the scholar—and by implication the genuine philosopher—is informed by his reading of the *Essays*.

Custom

'Schopenhauer as Educator' begins with an impassioned plea that we free ourselves from the 'chains of fear and convention'. We cling to these chains rather than break them, Nietzsche claims, because we are simply too 'lazy' to face 'the inconveniences with which unconditional honesty and nakedness would burden' us. What this opening section amounts to is a call to a more authentic existence, to a transformed life, one which goes beyond an unthinking adherence to custom: 'Be your self! All you are doing, thinking, desiring, is not you yourself' (SE 1). Such a demand to reconstitute our lives is a central feature of the philosophies of the Greco-Roman tradition. As Hadot observes, while 'their methodologies differ, we find in all philosophical schools [of this tradition] the same awareness of the power of the human self to free itself from everything which is alien to it'—from the Stoic concern with liberation from externals to the Epicurean preoccupation with the

rooting out of unnecessary desires.[30] Hence, the influence of Greco-Roman thought on Nietzsche's conception of the philosopher in 'Schopenhauer as Educator' is clear from the outset, with the opening section evoking countless passages from Stoic literature in particular.

A desire to return to and care for the self underpins this call to authentic existence: Marcus Aurelius advises the Stoic practitioner to 'retreat into yourself … constantly accord yourself this retreat, and give new life to yourself'.[31] By the same token, Nietzsche urges his readers to free themselves from common customs and appropriated opinions, and by 'finding oneself' or 'coming to oneself', lead an 'awakened life' (SE 1). This is necessary because we typically live under the cloak of convention, deadened to life by the overwhelming force of habit and routine. For Nietzsche, most individuals refuse to acknowledge the 'productive uniqueness within', as the burdens of unconventionality are very often 'unendurable' (SE 3). Consequently, instead of turning inward and living according to the law of our own being, we remain 'wholly exterior' and, through a combination of fear and laziness, wedded to a constricted and superficial life that is not of our own making. To aid this process, we don comfortable and comforting masks, and by way of 'a hundred masquerades … man forgets himself' (SE 4). Nietzsche discerns clear evidence of this in the behavior of the rising German middle-class, with its 'feverish' commitment to money-making. The 'breathless grasping' and 'restlessness' of business pursuits, Nietzsche suggests, serve as a distraction for his contemporaries from the real task of self-knowledge: 'Haste is universal because everyone is in flight from himself' (SE 5). Nietzsche's judgment on his society is of a piece with many such verdicts in the Greco-Roman tradition, and brings to mind the words of Lucretius (written in the 1st century BCE): 'So each man flies from himself … /And hates himself because he is sick in mind/And does not know the cause of his disease'.[32]

However, what is most conspicuous about the call to authentic existence at the heart of 'Schopenhauer as Educator' is its distinctly Montaignean tenor. One of the major themes of the *Essays* concerns the remarkable power of custom, and its capacity

---

[30] Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, p. 266. Hadot goes on, a few pages later, to say that the 'philosophies of Nietzsche and of Schopenhauer are also invitations to radically transform one's way of life. Both men were, moreover, thinkers steeped in the tradition of ancient philosophy' (p. 272).

[31] Aurelius, *Meditations*, p. 23.

[32] Lucretius, *On the Nature of the Universe*, 3: 1065-1075.

to dull our senses and narrow our thinking, to enslave us in unrewarding lives. Montaigne, like Nietzsche, represents the move away from convention as a liberation and understands habit as a tyrannical force that frustrates self-knowledge: 'the principle activity of custom is to seize us and to grip us in her claws so that it is hardly in our power to struggle free and come back to ourselves' (I.23; T114, S130 [83]). For Montaigne, to live an awakened life we must 'tear off the mask' of custom, as there is 'no way of life more feeble and stupid than one which is guided by prescriptions and instilled habit' (III.13; T1061, S1229 [830]). Montaigne also recognizes the difficulty faced by anyone who endeavors to eschew the strictures of convention: 'We are swept on downstream, but to struggle back towards the self against the current is a painful movement' (III.9; T979, S1132 [766]). And while failing to stress, as Nietzsche does, the complicity of our fear and laziness in this regard, Montaigne issues a near identical summons to authenticity: 'Look back into yourself. … Bring back to yourself your mind and your will which are being squandered elsewhere' (ibid.). For Nietzsche, unless one is able to unchain oneself from social convention and public opinion one 'cease[s] to be aware of life' and is 'cheated' out of oneself (SE 4). Insincere public personas alienate us from our true selves, preventing access to self-knowledge. Montaigne is no less conscious of this danger: 'We cheat ourselves of what is rightly useful to us in order to conform our appearance to public opinion' (III.9; T932, S1081 [729]). As regards his contemporaries, Montaigne finds that 'the mass of men nowadays' are 'senseless', 'continually bobbing about in a storm of conflicting passions' (I.42; T252, S290 [191]). Accordingly, he comes to a corresponding determination on the society of his own time as Nietzsche does on German society of the 19th century, crystallized in a statement that bears a remarkable resemblance to Nietzsche's: 'Each man rushes elsewhere and towards the future, since no man has reached his own self' (III.12; T1022, S1183 [799]).

In the foregoing observations we have seen that Nietzsche conceives the philosopher as an individual living a singular mode of existence. The life of such a thinker is one of uncompromising independence, free of the usual ties to state institutions, untainted by the intellectually debasing need for money-making, and immune to the limiting prejudices of popular opinion and social convention. Furthermore, based firmly on the Hellenistic model, Nietzsche's ideal philosopher is one who is dedicated to the painful task of self-knowledge. Although Schopenhauer is offered as the embodiment of the Nietzschean ideal, it is clear that Nietzsche's conception of the philosopher is also informed by the example of Montaigne. Moreover,

the understanding of the philosopher adumbrated above is developed and expanded in Nietzsche's middle works under the guise of the 'free spirit'. Vivarelli persuasively argues that we may view Montaigne as the 'actual model' for the free spirit of these works, and *Human, All Too Human* in particular, since in the *Essays* we find the same desire for 'intellectual independence', the same 'absolute need for freedom', expressed in similar 'motifs and images'.[33] In the preface to *Human, All Too human*, echoing the words of 'Schopenhauer as Educator', Nietzsche contrasts the free spirit with the bound spirit who seems 'to be chained for ever to its pillar and corner' (HAH P3). Unsurprisingly, it is the supreme intellectual independence of the free spirit that is continuously stressed: 'He is called a free spirit who thinks differently from what, on the basis of his origin, environment, his class and profession, or on the basis of the dominant view of the age, would have been expected of him' (HAH 225). What is more, whereas in 'Schopenhauer in Educator' Nietzsche writes of the 'dignified distance' of the genuine philosopher from all aspects of the state apparatus as well as the zeitgeist, the free spirit of *Human, All Too Human* is characterized by a 'fearless hovering over men, customs, laws and the traditional evaluation of things' (HAH 34).

But for Nietzsche, a fearless hovering over society is not enough to confirm one's status as a genuine philosopher: independence must be accompanied by self-knowledge. In 'Schopenhauer as Educator', he proposes that individuals internalize aspects of the culture of their time, which act as so many dead weights on their natural vibrancy and 'productive uniqueness'. The instinctive or reflexive adherence to cultural norms estranges them from their 'true' self, since each individual 'is a unique miracle … uniquely himself to every last movement of his muscles' (SE 1). What Nietzsche calls 'the *first consecration to culture* [*die erste Weihe der Kultur*]' is the aspiration of the individual to push beyond the obscuring sedimentation of culture within, all that is not truly him- or herself, and uncover the authentic self buried beneath (SE 6). Schopenhauer accomplished this task of self-knowledge: 'Schopenhauer strove … against that … unworthy mother, his age, and by as it were expelling it from him, he healed and purified his being and rediscovered himself' (SE 3). And if, in the *Essays*, Montaigne writes of the power of habit 'to seize us in her claws so that it is hardly in

[33] Vivarelli, "Montaigne und der 'Freie Geist'", p. 82.

our power to struggle free', Nietzsche, in *Human, All Too Human*, offers the metaphor of being ensnared in a 'net of spider-webs'.[34]

> Everything habitual draws around us an even firmer net of spider-webs; then soon we notice that the threads have become cords. … [T]he free spirit … sorrowfully again and again rends apart the net that surrounds him: even though he will as a consequence suffer numerous great and small wounds—for he has to rend those threads *from himself* (HAH 427).

This is the suffering involved in self-knowledge: to find ourselves we must discard cherished parts of our psyche and renounce a former, impoverished way of life that, although comfortable and easy and held in the reassuring embrace of custom, is devoid of a thoroughgoing self-awareness. Montaigne, like the free spirit, seeks to tear apart the net and undertake the difficult and potentially distressing labor of self-examination: 'I see myself and explore myself right into my innards [*jusque aux entrailles*]' (III.5; T824, S956 [644]). Mirroring Nietzsche's notion of a consecration to culture, Montaigne deems this work to be essential, as 'it is not enough to withdraw from the mob … we have to withdraw from such attributes of the mob as are within us. It is our own self we have to isolate and take back into possession' (I.39; T234, S268-9 [176]).

Montaigne's influence, then, extends well beyond 'Schopenhauer as Educator' to Nietzsche's more mature understanding of the philosopher as revealed in the figure of the free spirit. The quote above from *Human, All Too Human* on the free spirit is also revealing in another important respect: Schopenhauer's pessimism. The idea that the free spirit 'will suffer … countless large and small wounds' from their struggle with the net of convention is reminiscent of a passage in 'Schopenhauer as Educator', where it is stated that Schopenhauer 'bore many scars and open wounds … and … acquired a disposition that may perhaps seem a little too astringent' (SE 3). What is of particular interest here is the direct relationship Nietzsche conceives between Schopenhauer's 'disposition' and his 'wounds'. A possible explanation for this is provided earlier in the section, where Nietzsche discusses the many 'dangers' that Schopenhauer faced as he began to engage in the philosophical life. Foremost among those dangers, Nietzsche

[34] Vivarelli quotes the following passage from the *Essays* as exemplifying Montaigne's 'unquenchable thirst' for freedom ("Montaigne und der 'Freie Geist'", p. 86): 'I so hunger after freedom that if anyone were to forbid me access to some corner of the Indies I would to some extent live less at ease' (III.13; T1049, S1216 [820]).

suggests, was the threat of 'isolation'. Schopenhauer earned his first psychological scar as a consequence of the 'indifference of his contemporaries' toward his philosophy. Although the philosopher has nothing but disdain for popular culture and common opinion, to function in society he or she is 'forced to present a semblance to the world'—affirming a certain mode of behavior outwardly while denying inwardly. As a result of this acute tension between interior and exterior existence, 'a cloud of melancholy gathers on their brows … and their perpetual bitter resentment of this constraint fills them with volcanic menace' (ibid.).

Schopenhauer expelled from himself all the limiting and constraining elements of his age. However, the battle to do so left an open wound, and resentment festered; his independence was won at great psychological cost. The consequences of this were profound, as Schopenhauer's denunciation of his age became a repudiation of life itself. But for Nietzsche, the philosopher must not focus too incessantly on the 'valuelessness of his time', for it is his duty 'to arrive at a just verdict on the whole fate of man' (ibid.). In Nietzsche's view, the philosopher should deliberately 'under-assess' the flaws and failings of their contemporaries, and so 'by overcoming the present in himself, also overcome in it the picture he gives of life' (ibid.). With Schopenhauer, however, the sufferings he experienced at the hands of his age go to the very center of his philosophy and his vision of humanity. Montaigne, on the other hand, is akin to the free spirit, who, blessed with 'a firm, mild, and at bottom cheerful soul', achieves freedom from the clutches of convention without 'envy or vexation' (HAH 34). Although scathing about the French society of his time, Montaigne accepted with relative ease the contradictions between the philosophical life and the concessions demanded of one to the customs of the time. In the Nietzschean conception, it seems, the life of the genuine philosopher is constituted by two existential choices. The first is obvious: the choice to engage in a philosophical mode of existence and all that it entails—complete independence and a hunger for self-knowledge—and in this regard both Schopenhauer and Montaigne are supreme exemplars. But the second choice is just as critical: 'Do you affirm existence in the depths of your heart? Would you be its advocate, its redeemer? For you have only to pronounce a single heartfelt Yes [*ein einziges wahrhaftiges Ja*]' (SE 3). Schopenhauer refused to make this second choice and affirm a Dionysian attitude to life. But as we have seen, Montaigne, by contrast, although doubtless exhibiting scars from his struggle against his age, carried no open wounds, and having successfully navigated the dangers of isolation, found human existence to be eminently worthwhile.

Section III: History and Tradition

Montaigne's historical consciousness

A central feature of Montaigne's writing is what could be called his historical consciousness, an intense preoccupation with the culture and thought of the Greco-Roman tradition. At first glance, given the innumerable quotations from ancient texts, the *Essays* may give the look of a work totally beholden to tradition, nothing more than a storehouse for the wisdom of the ancients. However, despite Montaigne's devotion to the great individuals of the Greco-Roman world, it would be a simplistic view indeed to see him as a thinker held captive by tradition. Montaigne's historical consciousness is complex and his relationship to the past ambiguous. For in the guise of a traditionalist, he offers his own, highly original interpretations of core teachings of the Greco-Roman philosophical tradition. Moreover, while Montaigne borrows liberally from all the major philosophical schools of antiquity, he is a subscriber to none—even if the tenets of Pyrrhonian scepticism seem, at times, to be offered as a legitimate structure around which a life can be sensibly fashioned, Montaigne never actually refers to himself as a sceptic, and much of the content of the *Essays* is wholly at odds with this form of scepticism.

The *Essays* are thus groundbreaking in many respects, not least stylistically: with his creation of the 'essay', Montaigne pioneers a new genre of literature, an open-ended and personal style of writing, having its origins in the more traditional forms of the dialogue and the letter, but departing substantially from both.[35] Most crucially, it is a style of writing tailored to innovation and experimentation; that is to say, in the *Essays*, antiquity is received not 'as a set of abstract propositions or an inert corpus of knowledge … [since] each essay will be in an important sense a fresh start, a new way of approaching antiquity'.[36] Furthermore, the very personal nature of Montaigne's philosophy—as well as his innovative appropriation of tradition—can be seen most readily in the way that he deals with the *Essays*' many 'borrowings' from past texts. In 'On physiognomy', he explains and defends his approach as follows:

[35] Friedrich, *Montaigne*, pp. 345-62.
[36] O' Brien, "Montaigne and antiquity", p. 54.

> I have indeed made a concession to the taste of the public with these borrowed ornaments which accompany me. But I do not intend them to cover me up or to hide me. … If I had had confidence to do what I really wanted, I would have spoken utterly alone. … Among my many borrowings I take delight in being able to conceal the occasional one, masking it and distorting it to serve a new purpose (III.12; T1033-4, S1196-7 [808-9]).

In other words, Montaigne always retains a critical distance from the ancient sources, allowing him the freedom not just to question and criticize but also to subtly alter and shape the meaning of a quotation to suit his needs. Consequently, although by way of quotation he 'locates himself in a tradition and in a community of learners that goes back to the ancients. … [H]e does not simply take over and repeat what others have said'.[37] Guarding his independence, Montaigne strives to take past thought in new directions, invigorating ancient ideas with fresh life. In the *Essays* we thus find that Montaigne always 'speaks as himself through the mouth of tradition', in such a way that 'what is borrowed comes together into an entirely new creation'.[38]

Plainly, then, Montaigne's relationship to the historical is anything but straightforward; and like Nietzsche, his undoubted reverence for the Greco-Roman heritage does not prevent him from appropriating fundamental aspects of that heritage in the service of advancing a profoundly distinctive philosophy. In 'On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life', Nietzsche engages in a systematic discussion of the distinct ways in which the individual relates to tradition, and attempts to elaborate the benefits and potential dangers of the 'historical sense'. The central proposition of this work is the following: '*the unhistorical and the historical are necessary in equal measure for the health of an individual, of a people and of a culture'* (HL 1). For Nietzsche, human life is a constant tension—exemplified in the contrary tendencies of the *Essays*—between revering the past and living creatively in the present. The problem with an overdeveloped historical sense, a clinging to tradition, is that the past can come to exert a stultifying pressure on the flow of daily life. Thus, in the Nietzschean conception, '[f]orgetting is essential to action of any kind', and there is a 'boundary at which the past has to be forgotten if it is not to become a gravedigger of the present' (ibid.). Happiness is to be found in escaping the past, in living unhistorically, which

[37] Hartle, *Michel de Montaigne*, p. 76.
[38] Friedrich, *Montaigne*, pp. 37-9.

enables one to 'sink down on the threshold of the moment' and 'be contained in the present' (ibid.). Nietzsche would see in Montaigne's playful appropriation of Greco-Roman thought a preeminent example of what he calls 'the plastic power [*die plastiche Kraft*]' of the individual: 'the capacity to develop out of oneself in one's own way, to transform and incorporate into oneself what is past and foreign' (ibid.). This plastic power is the driving force behind what Nietzsche terms the 'monumental' approach to history, one of three ways, he argues, in which history pertains to the individual—alongside the 'antiquarian' and the 'critical'. And as Marchi notes, this 'tripartite historical schema displays discursive characteristics' very similar to those found in the *Essays*.[39]

The monumental

The most conspicuous way in which Montaigne relates to the historical is by revering the most influential figures of antiquity—writers, philosophers, historians, statesmen and generals—who he repeatedly offers as models to be followed. Montaigne wants the reader to be inspired by these predecessors, to illuminate the present with the past: 'Those rare persons who have been hand-picked by the wise to be exemplary to us all I will not hesitate … to load with honour, insofar as my material allows' (I.37; T226-7, S259 [170]). In Montaigne's use of these rare individuals, as exemplars to take inspiration from or imitate, we have a striking example of what Nietzsche terms a monumental relationship to history. This mode of the historical belongs 'above all to the man of deeds … who needs models, teachers, comforters and cannot find them among his contemporaries' (HL 2). For Nietzsche, in looking to the outstanding individuals of earlier times—as opposed to mediocre contemporaries—we realize not only that greatness once existed but that it may again be possible. Although Nietzsche believes that the European culture of his time is in a state of 'ossification and decay', as we have seen, he also argues that the task of the philosopher is to 'arrive at a just verdict [*ein gerechtes Urteil*] on the whole fate of man' (SE 3). A monumental engagement with history is pivotal to the formation of this verdict: 'the man of action avoids despair and disgust by turning his gaze backward … he flees from resignation and needs history as a specific against it' (HL 2). In this way, a focus on monumental history is most necessary

[39] Marchi, *Montaigne among the Moderns*, p. 135.

and appropriate in times of cultural degeneration. Thus, in the *Essays*, Montaigne's monumentalism goes hand in hand with a lament for the greatness of past ages and a critique of the corruption and superficiality of his contemporaries. Like Nietzsche, he urges his readers to overcome their contempt for the present by studying the lives of the great individuals of the past.

In a sense, a monumental approach to history follows naturally from a conception of philosophy as a way of life. When philosophy is understood as a mode of living or way of being, the example of the philosopher's outward life must become an object of study. A study of history—in the sense of knowledge of the great lives of the past—is therefore essential to the philosophic enterprise. Aspects of Nietzsche's thinking on the historical are clearly prefigured in the *Essays*. In 'On educating children', Montaigne gives us a close definition of the monumental *avant la lettre*: History can be 'a study bearing fruit beyond price', the 'object' of which 'is less to stamp the date of the fall of Carthage … then to understand the behavior of Hannibal and Scipio' (I.26; T155, S175 [115]). In Book II of the *Essays*, this stress on the monumental continues. Commenting on historians, Montaigne states that the 'most appropriate … are those who write men's lives, since they linger longer over motives than events, over what comes from inside more than what happens outside' (II.10; T396, S467 [303]). Both Montaigne and Nietzsche see monumental history, when explored and exploited to the full, as a potentially continuous source of direction and inspiration. Montaigne proposes that we should 'always imagine [we] are with Cato, Phocion, Aristides, in whose sight the very madmen would hide their faults' (I.39; T242, S278 [183]), while Nietzsche reveals that there 'have been four pairs who did not refuse themselves to me … Epicurus and Montaigne, Goethe and Spinoza, Plato and Rousseau, Pascal and Schopenhauer … upon these eight I fix my eyes and see theirs fixed upon me' (AOM 408).

Monumental history is necessarily created in the realm of the unhistorical. Each disciple of monumental history becomes, in turn, the next link in the chain of greatness, a teacher and comforter to those who follow. Nietzsche offers Schopenhauer as the supreme educator to his contemporaries, yet abandons romantic pessimism. The monumental provides examples to be followed, but if greatness is to exist in the present and continue in the future such examples must be overtaken and superseded. If philosophy is an art of living, a return to the self and to authentic existence, then treating 'an exemplar as merely a model for imitation is to fail faithfully to follow

oneself'.[40] Nietzsche's engagement with Schopenhauer provides the occasion for his own self-development as a thinker, and the most appropriate title of the work that symbolizes their relationship, he eventually comes to understand, is not 'Schopenhauer as Educator' but 'Nietzsche as Educator'. Likewise, Montaigne must turn his back on his friend and soul mate La Boétie, the greatest man who he had ever met, a man in whom the splendor of former ages could be witnessed once again: 'The mould of his mind was cast on the model of centuries different from ours' (I.28; T193, S219 [144]). While never ceasing to love him, Montaigne renounces his attachment to the kind of Stoical humanism La Boétie exemplified. In Books II and III of the *Essays*, therefore, we discover that the 'Stoical humanists, once his heroes and in some measure his teachers, have proven inadequate and become his targets'.[41] In this way, without the 'envelope of the unhistorical [*Hülle des Unhistorischen*]' neither Montaigne nor Nietzsche 'would have begun or dared to begin' the self-transformation of the past. As it is only by setting aside teachers and tradition, by an active forgetting, that the creative assimilation of the past is possible: 'The unhistorical is … an atmosphere within which alone life can germinate' (HL 1).

Montaigne is acutely aware of the crucial link between the monumental and a constructive disremembering. A recurring conceit of the *Essays* is the author's avowal of an extraordinarily poor memory. The following admission is typical: 'I doubt if there is any other memory in the world as grotesquely faulty as mine is' (I.9; T34, S32 [21]). It is especially notable that, at the same time as Montaigne professes his admiration for the great teachers of the past, he also admits that, having sought their wisdom, he 'straightaway forget[s] the author, the source, the wording and other particulars' (II.17; T635, S740 [494]). The wisdom of the past, Montaigne suggests, should be internalised and become the very 'material' of one's own judgement. Moreover, he claims that 'an outstanding memory' can be a far from advantageous capacity, quite often leading to a 'settled mind' and the submissive retracing of 'other men's footsteps' (I.9; T35, S33 [22]).[42] No doubt, in a work demonstrating an almost stupefying recollection of historical detail, Montaigne's declarations of forgetfulness are partly ironical. But they serve a more important function than mere rhetorical effect: the deeper intent is to create a space for the unhistorical: 'Too much memory stifles his efforts at self-expression. …

[40] Conant, "Nietzsche's Perfectionism", p. 206.
[41] Frame, *Montaigne*, p. 180.
[42] 'Many a man fails to become a thinker only because his memory is too good' (AOM 122).

As he forgets, he can live and express himself in the vital present'.[43] They also provide a certain license for the novelty of Montaigne's gloss on the philosophies of antiquity. As a consequence, in Montaigne's feigned concern regarding the deficiencies of his memory, what we are really witnessing is a conscious and determined effort to stress 'the perpetual forgetting that is the counterpart of innovation'.[44] In this regard, a common tactic of Montaigne is what could be described as the deliberate misrecollection or misconstrual of statements from past works, enabling him to press a quotation into the service of an argument differing from, or even completely at odds with, the spirit of the source material.

In 'Schopenhauer as Educator', Nietzsche describes Montaigne as the 'freest and mightiest of souls'. In the light of our discussion of the historical, it is evident that Nietzsche offers Montaigne as a model to humankind, an inspirer of greatness, whose 'most essential being … posterity cannot do without' (HL 2). But much more than this, Montaigne is not just another esteemed member in the pantheon of the monumental: Nietzsche deliberately sets Montaigne apart within that pantheon, so that he is not simply an exemplar of greatness but, for Nietzsche, *the* exemplar of greatness—'If I were set the task, I could endeavor to make myself at home in the world with him'. Given this status, it is reasonable to suppose that in Nietzsche's elucidation and illustration of the monumental in 'On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life' Montaigne is, as his most admired 'educator', considerably in mind. Aside from the agreement between this *Meditation* and the *Essays* on the proper task of historical study, and the importance of active 'forgetting', there is other, not insignificant textual evidence that Montaigne is a crucial but undeclared influence on Nietzsche's notion of the monumental.

The first insinuation of this comes when Nietzsche proposes that the demand for monumental history expresses a kind of Montaignean affirmation of life, or what he calls a 'fundamental…faith in humanity' (HL 2). In line with the entire tenor of the *Essays*, the monumental instills the feeling that human existence 'is a glorious thing' (ibid.). A Montaignean note is again struck when Nietzsche claims that the gravest threat to the inspiring power of monumental history is '[a]pathetic habit', which 'casts itself across the path that greatness has to thread … and … stifles it' (ibid.). This sentiment anticipates the opening section of 'Schopenhauer as Educator', and its

[43] Marchi, *Montaigne among the Moderns*, p. 161.
[44] Starobinski, *Montaigne in Motion*, p. 86.

Montaignean call to break the chain of habit and live an authentic existence. But the surest allusion to Montaigne comes when Nietzsche announces that the 'immortals' of the monumental have 'a single teaching': 'to regard [existence] with Olympian laughter or at least sublime mockery; often they descended to their grave with an ironic smile' (ibid.). We should recall here the fundamental importance that Montaigne ascribes to the human capacity for laughter and his admiration for Democritus. Finally, it is worth noting that both Nietzsche and Montaigne, as regards the best means to approach the monumental, offer similar advice: acquaint oneself with Plutarch. Nietzsche directs those with an interest in history to 'satiate' their minds with Plutarch, and to believe in themselves the same way that they believe in his heroes (HL 6). Likewise, for Montaigne, 'of historians of every kind, Plutarch is the man for me' (II.10; T396, S467 [303]): 'He is a philosopher who teaches us what virtue is' (II.32; T704, S822 [549]).

The antiquarian

According to Nietzsche's historical schema, '[e]ach of the three species of history … belong to a certain soil and a certain climate' (HL 2). He puts forward the Renaissance, that remarkable flowering of artistic creativity, as a great monumental epoch, raised, he claims, 'on the shoulders of just … a band of a hundred men' (ibid.). But the example of the Renaissance also clearly shows the necessity of an antiquarian relationship to the historical. After all, it was only because the ideas and culture of classical antiquity were 'preserved and revered', treated with 'loyalty and love', that such a recrudescence of ancient learning was possible at all (HL 3). The role of the antiquarian historian is to approach tradition with 'piety', to protect and safeguard the former achievements of the monumental. In this way, the antiquarian and the monumental are interlocked in a perpetual dance of mutual instigation: the antiquarian is the seedbed of the monumental, but must give way if the monumental is to exist anew—the innovations of the Renaissance were, to a certain extent, an impious outgrowth of a reverence of the past. This process plays itself out within cultures, communities and within the individual. Although Nietzsche's appropriation of the Greco-Roman tradition represents a monumentalistic act, his admiration for that tradition is clear and explicit. In 'Schopenhauer as Educator', his conception of the philosopher is expressly animated by the exemplars of Greek antiquity, and 'On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life' begins with the admission that the 'untimely experiences' that prompted his

Meditations were occasioned 'to the extent that I am a pupil of earlier times, especially the Hellenic' (HL F).

For Nietzsche, a chief characteristic of the antiquarian individual is that the 'possession of ancestral goods changes its meaning in such a soul: *they* rather possess *it*' (HL 3). In this circumstance, the 'trivial … and obsolete … acquire their own dignity and inviolability', and what is more, in the 'rules and regulations' of tradition the antiquarian individual finds 'his force, his industry, his joy' (ibid.). Obviously, given both his extensive referencing of ancient texts and his veneration of past exemplars, this picture of the antiquarian individual brings the figure of Montaigne immediately to mind. His love for the Greco-Roman tradition is profuse: 'I readily allow myself to be captive to the ancients. … Ancient Rome … is of passionate concern to me. I like thinking about their faces. … I mutter their great names between my teeth. I venerate them' (III.9; T975-6, S1128 [763]). Throughout the *Essays*, this sentiment is repeatedly affirmed. Nietzsche, however, conceives a danger in this kind of antiquarianism: if the preservation and conservation of tradition becomes excessive, the historical 'no longer conserves life', but 'mummifies it', and one's engagement with history ceases to be 'animated and inspired by … fresh life' (HL 3). In this case, the antiquarian smothers the creative possibilities of the monumental, past greatness leading to no future achievement. Yet, for Nietzsche, the most essential purpose of the veneration of the past must be to enable '*the fullest exertion of the vigor of the present* [*der höchsten Kraft der Gegenwart*]' (HL 6). But perhaps Nietzsche would take no issue with a Montaignean reverence of the past, considering that his own professed love for the culture of Ancient Greece is no less ardent; in fact, he concludes 'On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life' by describing Ancient Greek culture as a 'unanimity of life, thought, appearance and will' that has 'achieved victory over all other cultures' (HL 10).

Nietzsche, however, expresses another worry concerning a disproportionate antiquarianism: 'The antiquarian sense … always possesses an extremely restricted field of vision', with the result that there 'is a lack of that discrimination of value … which would distinguish between the things of the past in a way that would do them justice' (HL 3). It is in this regard that Montaigne's antiquarianism seems to take on an oppressive aspect. Although severely critical of the culture and political system of his day, Montaigne insists, nonetheless, that there 'is no system so bad (provided it be old and durable) as not to be better than change and innovation' (II.17; T639, S745 [497]). Montaigne's antiquarianism is unbalanced by a lack of 'measure and proportion', by a

‘backward glance’ that takes ‘everything old and past … to be equally worthy of reverence’ (HL 3). On the Montaignean view, in matters of culture and politics, change and innovation are a potentially endless source of societal degradation, and so we should entrust ourselves to the safe arms of tradition and the ‘awesomesness of ancient custom [*reverence de l'ancien usage*]’ (II.12; T416, S490 [320]). In a sense, Montaigne’s antiquarianism could be said to overpower his monumentalism: he is a student of the great lives of the past, but refuses to affirm the conditions necessary to foster the greatness of the future. Because he ‘undervalues that which is becoming’, Montaigne is all too willing to paralyze ‘the man of action who … will and must offend some piety or other’ (HL 3). Nietzsche’s closing comments on the antiquarian could have been written with Montaigne in mind, such is the accuracy with which they seem to capture his thinking. He proposes that the unalterable conviction of the antiquarian individual is that when one considers ancient custom, that ‘great sum of piety and reverence’, then it is ‘arrogant or even wicked to replace such an antiquity with a novelty … the single unit of that which is evolving and has just arrived’ (ibid.). And in the *Essays* Montaigne declares that it ‘is greatly to be doubted whether any obvious good can come from changing any traditional law … compared with the evil of changing it. … I abhor novelty, no matter what visage it presents’ (I.23; T118, S134 [86]). Owing to his experience of civil war, it may well seem that the stability and security of tradition held for Montaigne an incalculable value.

But is it really the case that Montaigne’s relationship to the historical was wholly coloured by the Protestant break with the traditions of the old established faith—and all the religiously-inspired conflict that ensued? Was Montaigne any more a cultural and political conservative than he was a religious conservative? In the *Essays*, there is ample textual evidence to support the view that, while pursuing the most radical intellectual independence, he decries any sort of cultural or political change. The following passage is representative of many others: ‘It is his soul that a wise man should withdraw from the crowd, maintaining its power and freedom freely to make judgments, whilst eternally accepting the received forms and fashions’ (ibid. T117, S133 [86]). Hence, Marchi claims that there is a ‘fundamental difference’ between Montaigne and Nietzsche, to the extent that ‘Nietzsche sought a break with the past … in order to create new cultural possibilities’, but Montaigne ‘would rather maintain the cultural paradigm

as it is'.[45] However, we should, I think, be as suspicious of Montaigne's apparent cultural and political conservatism as we are of his apparent piety. Indeed, I argue in Chapter 3 that he desires not just a renewal of French culture but the complete overturning of the values of the Greco-Roman tradition. Like Nietzsche, he diagnoses an axiological sickness at the heart of Western culture, and seeks the re-naturalization of the human. And as regards the supposed political conservatism of the *Essays*, despite passages like that quoted above, when one takes the work as a whole, the critique of conservatism to be found there is far more persuasive than any defence. As Schaefer rightly notes, Montaigne 'surely cannot have been unaware that his denunciations of the stupidity and injustice of many existing laws would tend to weaken his readers' disposition to maintain or accept them'.[46] Moreover, his argument for political stability turns dramatically near the end of the essay 'On habit', to a discussion of historical examples where the only appropriate action was to overturn the laws, and concludes with the following: 'Plutarch praised Philopoemen for being born to command, knowing how to issue commands by the laws and, when public necessity required it, to the laws' (I.23; T122, S139 [90]). Accordingly, we may understand 'his periodic disclaimers of intending to promote any sort of political change' as having 'the same protective, rhetorical function as the affirmations of submission that he appends to his attack on religious orthodoxy'.[47]

The critical

In view of the stultifying cultural consequences of an immoderate antiquarianism, a third mode of relating to the historical is necessary, one that calls a halt to an excessive veneration of the past and paves the way for a new monumentalism. While the monumental is creative and the antiquarian preserving, the 'critical' constitutes a destructive drive to break old pieties and shatter traditions: 'If he is to live, man must possess and from time to time employ the strength to break up and dissolve a part of the past' (HL 3). *Zarathustra* opens with the section entitled 'On the Three Transformations', a figurative treatment of this threefold relationship to the historical. The antiquarian is represented by the 'camel', a 'weight-bearing spirit in which

[45] Marchi, *Montaigne among the Moderns*, pp. 154-5.
[46] Schaefer, *The Political Philosophy of Montaigne*, p. 156.
[47] Ibid.

reverence dwells', and the monumental is represented by the 'child', a spirit that finds its home in the unhistorical: 'Innocence the child is and forgetting, a beginning anew, a self-propelling wheel'. The child is a creator of values, but the child lacks the power to seize for itself the freedom for such creation: this is the task of the 'lion'. The lion has the courage to exist in 'the loneliest desert', and possesses the critical spirit, which 'must find delusion and caprice even in the most sacred' (Z 1.1). For Nietzsche, a critical approach to the historical is an essential task of the philosopher. As discussed earlier, he understands the philosophical life in terms of two 'consecrations to culture': the first involves attaining self-knowledge by freeing oneself from the claims of custom; the second entails a willingness to be 'an enemy' to the culture and institutions that surround one. In 'On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life', both of these responsibilities are fused in the figure of the critical individual, whose role it is to 'scrupulously examine' the past before 'tribunal' and ultimately 'condemn' it (HL 3).

But the philosopher is not to employ the critical spirit in an indiscriminate fashion: a continuous criticism would enfeeble the creative force of the monumental; destruction must be followed first by construction and then by conservation before a court of judgment is once more assembled. Consequently, for Nietzsche, 'only he who is oppressed by a present need, and who wants to throw off this burden at any cost, has need of critical history' (HL 2). Nietzsche's need grew out not only of dissatisfaction with the society of his time and its Platonic-Christian heritage but also with Schopenhauer, the philosopher who he had thought offered cultural deliverance. The catalyst that brought Montaigne's critical spirit to life was a personal tragedy, the death of his great friend La Boétie. It was to free himself from a 'melancholy' mood that Montaigne began to write the *Essays*. As Frame explains, 'La Boétie was the only man Montaigne fully trusted as witness to his life. With him dead, the *Essays* must serve instead'.[48] Hence, a refrain of the *Essays* is Montaigne striving to understand himself: 'I hunger to make myself known' (III.5; T824, S955-6 [643-4]). Oppressed by this need for self-knowledge, Montaigne engages the Classical authors. But this engagement, though often reverential, is essentially judgmental and critical.[49] The findings of Montaigne's self-study are frequently at odds with the wisdom of Stoic and Epicurean sages; the philosophies of Socrates and Plato are at times ridiculed. And in order to fully

[48] Frame, *Montaigne*, p. 77.

[49] Relevant here is also the mocking, reflective laughter that both thinkers seek to cultivate. Lippitt suggests that such laughter 'can prevent the ossification of our thinking', enabling development of 'the ability to stand back and look at what has been dominating us' ("Laughter", pp. 117-18).

address the existential questions and problems that propel his writing, Montaigne deems it necessary to break with or reinterpret the traditions in which he had assumed solutions were to be found: he rejects metaphysics and any transcendent basis for morality, rejects also the immortality and unity and the soul (Chapter 2); he denounces ascetic ideals and overturns the unquestioned assumption of ancient and medieval philosophy of the inferiority of the body and its stark separation from mind (Chapter 3); and he advocates a higher naturalism, aiming to overcome the traditional opposition between reason and passion (Chapter 4).

In the Greco-Roman tradition, the philosopher is conceived as an individual concerned with a care of the self and the cultivation of character. Irrelevant to this vocation, the issue of cultural renewal plays no substantial role in the philosophical life. With his notion of a second consecration to culture, Nietzsche thus offers a highly distinctive conception of philosophy as an art of living, a conception which separates him from the Stoical, Epicurean and Sceptical literatures. On the Nietzschean view, the first consecration to culture—an inward turn to the self to free oneself from the constraints of convention—is not the end of the philosopher's task: the philosopher, having released him- herself from the insufficiencies of the age, must accomplish the additional goal of creating new cultural values, values which will reinvigorate society, freeing individuals from the repressive influence of previous cultural norms. As a consequence, in *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche insists that we should view 'Schopenhauer as Educator' as introducing an understanding of the philosopher 'as a terrible explosive power [*einen furchtbaren Explosionsstoff*] that is a danger to everything' (EH, 'UM' 3).[50] This is precisely how Nietzsche sees Montaigne: he sees fit to praise the revolutionary Montaigne, the Montaigne of 'mischief [*Mutwille*]' and 'danger', as a philosophical ideal above all others (EH 2.3; KSB 7, 584). Nietzsche peers behind Montaigne's mask of conservatism, just as he does his mask of piety, and discovers an exemplar in terms of both conservations to culture. Therefore, while it may be true that in both thinkers we find 'the attempt to assert vital, dynamic subjectivity under the spectre of the authoritative past', it is Montaigne's 'critical spirit' that is a key influence

[50] The idea of the philosopher as a lawgiver and creator of values becomes central to Nietzsche's later works. Zarathustra seeks creators like himself and proposes that 'through evaluating alone is there value: and without evaluating the kernel of existence would be hollow' (Z. 1.15). And in *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche points toward a new kind of philosopher, what he calls the 'philosopher of the future', who will be a 'commander' and 'legislator' (BGE 211).

on both ‘On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life’ and ‘Schopenhauer as Educator’.[51]

[51] Marchi, *Montaigne among the Moderns*, p. 104.

CHAPTER 2: THE ART OF PSYCHOLOGICAL DISSECTION

Section I: Human, All Too Human

The historical and self-knowledge

Nietzsche sees a 'hypertrophied' historical sense as a grave threat to his contemporaries. If a culture is to develop and advance, he claims, it must cultivate a healthy engagement with the three species of history. Such a 'natural relationship' of an age to the historical is one that is 'evoked by hunger, regulated by the extent of its need, held in bounds by its inherent plastic powers' (HL 4). For Nietzsche, however, his time is marked by a morbid 'fever of history', which is destroying the capacity of individuals to disregard the past and act unhistorically (HL F). Moreover, past greatness is devalued and obscured in the rush to grant a measure of importance to the trivial details of even the most debased historical epoch. Most disturbing of all is that, in a people suffering from this kind of historical excess, the individual's critical engagement with the past ceases to be motivated by real and pressing needs, the historical is no longer personally appropriated in the service of alleviating an existential burden, and the past, ideally a 'nourishing food', is converted into a seemingly inexhaustible source of barren knowledge (HL 10).

The most troubling consequence of this 'malady' is what Nietzsche refers to as 'weakened personality' (HL 5). Given the atmosphere of intemperate historicism, the modern German, Nietzsche suggests, has to contend with exposure to a storm of 'customs, arts, philosophies, [and] religions', none of which, individually or collectively, answer to serious exigency or relate in any way to authentic feeling (HL 4). The necessary and direct result of the attempt to habituate to 'such a … conflict-ridden household' is that many of his contemporaries experience a 'chaotic inner world', and exhibit a 'remarkable antithesis' between inner and outer (ibid.). The past is no longer assimilated by the individual to enrich experience and guide action, but remains a superficial and artificial 'decoration'. Such a circumstance has a devastating impact on the individual, insofar as it leads to the 'expulsion of the instincts by history', whereby 'no one dares to appear as he is' (HL 5). Predictably, Nietzsche proposes that this

‘emptying’ of the personality first takes hold in the German education system. The student’s ‘head is crammed with a tremendous number of ideas derived from a highly indirect knowledge of past ages’, which means they are prevented from ‘evolving … a coherent living complex of experiences’ of their own (HL 10). Nietzsche therefore maintains that his fellow Germans have been instructed by education and encouraged by culture to ‘feel in abstractions’ (ibid.). What they have failed to appreciate is that ‘life itself’ cannot be successfully approached through indirect knowledge, but should be understood as a ‘craft which must be learned from the ground up and practised remorselessly’ (ibid.).

This is the lesson provided by the ancient Greeks. For Nietzsche, there is a clear and effective cure on offer to his contemporaries for the scourge of weakened personality that besets them. What is necessary is to heed the oracle of the god of Delphi: ‘Know yourself’. Only then can they hope to ‘become *human* again’ and cease to be merely ‘aggregates of humanlike qualities’ (ibid.). The example of the Greeks is particularly instructive, Nietzsche explains, because they, too, faced the threat of ‘perishing through “history”’, and were nearly overwhelmed by ‘Semitic, Babylonian, Lydian [and] Egyptian forms and ideas’. Yet, ‘through protracted application of that oracle’, the Greeks ‘learned *to organize the chaos*’, and by ‘thinking back … to their real needs … they again took possession of themselves’ (ibid.). Nietzsche thus begins ‘Schopenhauer as Educator’ with a demand to the reader to ‘Be your self’. And as a corrective to speculative abstraction in education and culture, he urges us to consider the lives of the pre-Socratic sages, who forged a remarkable art of living and care of the soul. This is the context in which he offers Montaigne as a paragon in the philosophical art of living, a true inheritor of Greek wisdom. But it is not just that Montaigne appropriates the most enriching aspects of Greco-Roman thought; Montaigne also possesses, to the highest imaginable degree, the characteristics that enabled the Greeks to develop a culture ‘without inner and outer’, a culture that represented the ‘unanimity of life, thought, appearance and will’. Namely, the qualities of ‘honesty … strength and truthfulness of … character’ (ibid.). Such qualities are essential to the task of self-knowledge, and as we have seen, may be ascribed, Nietzsche believes, to Montaigne as to no other.

Montaigne casts the enterprise of the *Essays* as an effort in self-portraiture: ‘Finding myself quite empty … I offered myself to myself as a theme. … I … decided to draw a portrait of myself from life’ (II.8; T364, S433 [278]). His writing, however,

moves well beyond the realm of a literary portrayal or a biographical account; Montaigne views self-portraiture not as an end in itself but as a means to the more important goal of self-study and self-knowledge. The wisdom of the Delphic oracle is affirmed continuously: 'I seek only that branch of learning which deals with knowing myself' (II.10; T388, S459 [297]). Again, the extent to which Nietzsche's take on society follows that of Montaigne is remarkable. Indeed, many of Montaigne's comments on his contemporaries seem to be almost paraphrased in 'On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life'. Like Nietzsche, Montaigne is especially exercised by the disjunction between inner and outer: 'most of our actions are but mask and cosmetic' (I.38; T229, S263 [172]). The upshot of such shallowness and dissimulation is that the mass of people are 'senseless', merely playing roles, as 'they understand neither themselves nor anyone else' (I.25; T138, S157 [102]). Under the corrupting influence of a debased culture, individuals, imperceptibly but unavoidably, turn 'masks and semblances into essential qualities', and thereby 'unlearn their own natures' (III.10; T989, S1144 [773-4]). For Montaigne, too, this emptying of personality coincides with near boundless erudition. Memory is swamped with knowledge, but understanding and judgement remain 'hollow'. In effect, what Montaigne sees at work in French society is, paradoxically, an 'ignorance' of the self 'made and engendered by knowledge' (I.54; T299, S349 [227]). But the knowledge referred to here is a frivolous form of knowledge, 'sprinkled' onto the soul, unrelated to authentic need. In the Montaignean conception, the only knowledge worth having—and the sole antidote to the loss of self fostered by French culture—is self-knowledge: 'All men gaze ahead … I turn my gaze inward, planting it there and keeping it there' (II.17; T641, S747 [499]). Accordingly, Nietzsche, in the fourth and final *Untimely Meditation*, 'Richard Wagner in Bayreuth', proposes that '[w]hat the individual Montaigne signifies within the agitation of the spirit of the Reformation' is 'a coming to rest within oneself, a peaceful being for oneself and relaxation' (WB 3).

Nietzsche's move to psychology

In 'Schopenhauer as Educator', Nietzsche gives expression to his deep admiration for Montaigne by stating: 'If I were set the task, I could endeavour to make myself at home in the world with him' (SE 2). With the publication of *Human, All Too Human*, in 1878, two years after 'Richard Wagner in Bayreuth', Nietzsche, it appears, attempts to turn

this hypothetical admission into concrete reality. Having stressed the absolute necessity of self-knowledge in the immediately preceding works, and having offered Montaigne as an exemplar in the philosophical art of living, Nietzsche now follows Montaigne's lead and begins to engage in a rigorous project of self-analysis. Montaigne describes the *Essays*, variously, as a 'withdrawal' into himself, a 'clinging' to himself, a 'cherishing' of himself. Nietzsche explains the genesis of *Human, All Too Human* as follows: 'I was overcome by *impatience* with myself: I saw that it was high time to reconsider *myself*' (EH, 'HAH' 3). For Montaigne, an examination of human behaviour more generally is a prerequisite to his own self-understanding, the study of the conduct of others a potentially endless source of self-insight. Hence, in the *Essays*, running in tandem with self-portraiture is a penetrating psychological analysis of what he calls 'our manners and motives' (I.21; T104, S119 [75]). With *Human, All Too Human*, Nietzsche moves squarely onto this Montaignean ground. His focus shifts to concerns that dominate attention in the *Essays*: the true springs of action and motivation, the basis of virtue, the psychological and physiological aspects of thought, and the nature of the self.[1] Consequently, in *Human, All Too Human*, Nietzsche laments the 'poverty in psychological observation' in Germany and calls for the cultivation of 'the art of psychological dissection' (HAH 35).[2] Montaigne is clearly pivotal to Nietzsche's embrace of such an art, as his foray into what could be called philosophical psychology involves, often implicitly, the taking up and development of many of the essayist's most acute psychological reflections.[3]

We can thus see that Montaigne becomes an exemplar for Nietzsche at a critical juncture in his intellectual development, offering encouragement and guidance as he

[1] This is a point already made by Williams, who writes that what *Human, All Too Human* represents is a transition in Nietzsche's thought from 'speculations about the universe to the study of concrete human actions … from the metaphysical to the ethical' (*Nietzsche and the French*, p. xx). What is more, guided by Montaigne, 'Nietzsche sees self-knowledge from now on as the key to all other knowledge' (ibid.).

[2] Although it is with the publication of the first part of *Human, All Too Human* that Nietzsche first 'self-consciously' casts himself as a psychologist, he 'had been laying the groundwork all along, even in the earliest writings from his youth' (Parkes, *Composing the Soul*, p. 3).

[3] Other factors, of course, were critical to the shaping of Nietzsche's thought as he began to write *Human, All Too Human*. Many commentators highlight the significance of the German Materialist movement of the 1850's and 60's, and particularly Friedrich Lange's *History of Materialism*, which Nietzsche read with enthusiasm in the late 1860's (see Stack's *Lange and Nietzsche*). German materialists, deploying psychological and more especially physiological explanations, sought to approach morality and religion from a purely naturalistic perspective. Another important but more immediate influence was that of Paul Rée, a psychologist who Nietzsche befriended two years prior to the publication of *Human, All Too Human*. While it is undeniable that Rée's impact was crucial, it must be admitted that, given his intensive reading of Montaigne, Nietzsche was already well primed to be receptive to Rée's psychological interpretations of moral, religious and metaphysical beliefs.

moved from the romantic pessimism of the *Birth of Tragedy* to the moral psychology of *Human, All Too Human*. In other words, Montaigne is an exemplar who bridges the early phases of Nietzsche's philosophical career. And unlike any other pre-*Human, All Too Human* influence on Nietzsche, Montaigne's importance only increases in the middle works. That is to say, if the *Essays* were 'alien' reading material in 1870, they were—as a foundational document on the art of psychological dissection—a matter of course in 1878, when Nietzsche began an intensive study of the French moral philosophy tradition. Moreover, given that Nietzsche is reading the *Essays* nearly a decade before the publication of *Human, All Too Human*, we may perhaps understand Montaigne as having 'prepared the ground' for his deep interest in other French moralists.[4] But of course, as regards the French moralists, Montaigne represents a special case: alone among them, he is also an exemplar for Nietzsche in terms of his 'cheerfulness', his art of living, and his critical engagement with the historical. Indeed, for Robert Pippin, the most important issue arising from Nietzsche's study of the French moralists is the 'Montaigne problem': 'how one might combine an uncompromising, brutal honesty about human hypocrisy and bad faith … with an affirmative reconciliation of some sort with such a weak and corrupt human condition'.[5]

With the turn to a more psychological and personal approach to philosophy, the influence of Montaigne begins to reverberate throughout Nietzsche's work. At the time of writing *Human, All Too Human*, the biographical similarities between the two thinkers must have struck Nietzsche forcefully; in fact, for both, the biographical and the philosophical are inextricably related. As noted earlier, Montaigne's 'raving concern with writing' was provoked by a personal catastrophe, the sudden death of his friend Etienne La Boétie. Montaigne describes the situation thus: 'It was a melancholy humour … brought on by the chagrin caused by the solitary retreat I plunged myself into a few years ago' (II.8; T364, S433 [278]). Therefore, in beginning the *Essays* and commencing self-study, Montaigne engages in a form of self-therapy, very much in the vein of the Greco-Roman schools of philosophy. As regards the practices of such schools, Stoicism and Epicureanism especially, 'every spiritual exercise is dialogical insofar as it is an exercise of authentic presence of the self to itself'.[6] In *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche describes *Human, All Too Human* as 'the monument to a crisis' (EH, 'HAH'

[4] Vivarelli, "Montaigne und der 'Freie Geist'", p. 83.
[5] Pippin, *Nietzsche, Psychology and First Philosophy*, p. 22.
[6] Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, p. 20.

1). The crisis referred to had multiple causes, the most devastating of which was the end of Nietzsche's friendship with Richard Wagner, whose romanticism had coloured his early philosophy, particularly his conception of art in *The Birth of Tragedy*. Nietzsche admits that the break from Wagner precipitated 'a deep sense of alienation': 'I carried my melancholy … around with me like a disease' (EH, 'HAH' 2). As with Montaigne and the *Essays*, Nietzsche's writing of *Human, All Too Human* represents his formulation of a highly personal psycho-philosophical self-therapy: 'this "return *to myself*" … was … the highest type of *convalescence*' (ibid. 4). And whereas Montaigne's solitude was intensified by the fact that he had, for the most part, retired from professional and political duties, another crucial factor in Nietzsche's crisis was his realization that he would have to leave his professorship in Basel, partly for health reasons, partly out of disillusionment with academic life. We thus have two philosophers, both mourning lost friendships, both in the grip of solitude but writing with a new and liberating independence.

Human, All Too Human also unmistakably signals Nietzsche's final escape from Schopenhauerian pessimism. His rejection is clear and absolute: 'Away with these overused … words optimism and pessimism. … [I]t is quite obvious that the world is not good and not evil, let alone the best of all or the worst of all worlds' (HAH 28). Hence, what was unstated but implicit in 'Schopenhauer as Educator', when Nietzsche raised Montaigne above Schopenhauer as a philosophical paragon, now becomes the express point of departure for his psychological investigations. Nietzsche traces what he believes to be the false beliefs and psychological errors which ground such pessimism. Given the rejection of Schopenhauer and the abandonment of Wagner, many commentators have seen in *Human, All Too Human* an abrupt and rather startling change in the direction of Nietzsche's thought. Michael Ure refers to 'the famous volte-face Nietzsche performs … his painful repudiation of his former philosophical and cultural mentors'.[7] But there is a tendency to overstate the apparent philosophical gulf separating *Human, All Too Human* from previous works. After all, as examined in chapter 1, Nietzsche refuses to endorse Schopenhauerian philosophy in both *The Birth of Tragedy* and 'Schopenhauer as Educator': in the former, Schopenhauerian language is used to reach conclusions completely at odds with Schopenhauerian philosophy, and in the latter, the focus is exclusively on the manner of Schopenhauer's philosophical

[7] Ure, *Nietzsche's Therapy*, p. 15.

life—Schopenhauerian language and metaphysics are dispensed with altogether. Furthermore, similar in spirit to 'Schopenhauer as Educator', 'Richard Wagner in Bayreuth', with respect to the eponymous exemplar, amounts to something closer to a subtle critique than a flattering tribute. Therefore, in many ways, *Human, All Too Human* represents an unsurprising evolution in Nietzsche's thought, not a stark reversal. In fact, if one attaches sufficient weight to Nietzsche's actual words in 'Schopenhauer as Educator', regarding Montaigne's importance as a philosophical inspiration, his move toward psychological self-study is not only unsurprising but inevitable.

Rejection of romantic pessimism

This is not to deny, however, that, in other respects, *Human, All Too Human* marks a decisive break with philosophical views Nietzsche forcefully espoused in earlier works. Quite rightly, *Human, All Too Human* is often characterized as inaugurating a so-called 'positivist phase' in his writing—a more appreciative and approving treatment of science and the scientific method. In 'Schopenhauer as Educator', Nietzsche presents the scholar, and more particularly the scholar of science, as an object of scorn, and scientific study as a woefully limited and impoverished enterprise: 'science is related to wisdom as virtuousness is related to holiness, it is cold and dry … it ossifies the humanity of its servants' (SE 6). This attitude to science in 'Schopenhauer as Educator' is a continuation of that voiced in *The Birth of Tragedy*, where, in thrall to Wagner's romanticism, he glories in the redemptive power of art. In this work, he understands art as inimically opposed to the spirit of science, which, with its inexhaustible 'lust' for knowledge and its 'arrogant delusion' that the 'innermost essence of things' can be penetrated, destroys mythopoetic illusions—the foundation of art's 'metaphysical solace [*Trost*]' (BT 7, 18). In *Human, All Too Human*, Nietzsche's new-found enthusiasm for science is announced in the opening aphorism, with its title of '*Chemistry of concepts and sensations*'. He then goes on to explode the notion of art as the 'completion' and 'perfection' of existence (BT 3). Far from it, art 'makes the sight of life bearable by laying over it the veil of unclear thinking', and in so doing artists are merely 'glorifying the religious and philosophical errors of mankind' (HAH 151, 220). Nietzsche no longer sees art and science as antagonistic, since both are necessary to a 'higher culture': the 'illusions, onesidednesses [*Einseitigkeiten*] [and] passions' of art must be present in a

society to give 'heat', and with the help of scientific knowledge, the 'evil and perilous consequences of overheating' can be prevented (HAH 251).

Such overheating occurs when we believe that artistically inspired feelings somehow put us in touch with a more exalted existence. For Nietzsche, his thinking on art in *The Birth of Tragedy* betrays an implicit adherence to untenable metaphysical presuppositions, which owe their origin not to profound philosophical thought but to acute psychological needs. Kant outlines the boundary to human knowledge and demonstrates the thing-in-itself to be unknowable. Schopenhauer, however, attempting the epistemologically impossible, tries to push beyond this Kantian limit and give an account of ultimate reality: the thing-in-itself as will. Based on this insupportable insight, he then understands human existence as an arena of endless willing, striving and desiring—and consequently endless suffering. Nietzsche comes to see this kind of metaphysical reasoning as based on nothing but 'passion, error and self-deception; the worst of all methods of acquiring knowledge' (HAH 9). In effect, Schopenhauer projects his own fears into the very structure of existence and takes his own feelings as 'fundamental qualities of mankind in general' (HAH 110). In 'On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life', Nietzsche admonishes the reader to gain self-knowledge by thinking back to his or her real needs. *Human, All Too Human* thus advocates the weakening and rooting out of the 'metaphysical need', which, although responsible for the 'dazzling errors' that have bestowed great meaning on human suffering, has prevented us from honestly confronting the true nature of the human condition (HAH 37). Nietzsche argues that in religion, metaphysics and art we delve no deeper into the essence of existence, and insists that the 'thing-in-itself', which had once 'appeared to be so much, indeed everything', is now worthy of 'Homeric laugher' (HAH 16).

Montaigne would have agreed wholeheartedly with this last remark. As Frame puts it, '[f]ewer men have been less metaphysical'.[8] No point is stressed more emphatically in the *Essays* than the absurdity and pointlessness of metaphysical speculation: 'the most gross and puerile of rhapsodies are to be found among thinkers who penetrate most deeply into the highest matters' (II.12; T526, S611 [407]). He continuously underlines the limitations of the human mind and the impossibility of

[8] Frame, *Montaigne*, p. 148.

absolute knowledge.[9] In fact, Montaigne proposes that '[t]o determine the limits of our powers … constitutes … the highest' wisdom (ibid. T482, S560 [371-2]). Like Nietzsche, he holds that it is in 'vanity', 'fantasy' and the general 'defects' of human nature that the real promptings of our metaphysical questing are to be found (ibid.). In Montaigne's view, we hunt after knowledge beyond our reach and then, having invented some dubious foundation on which to construct a metaphysical edifice, proceed to put the utmost trust in what we least understand. In consequence, he eschews metaphysics completely, in favour of self-knowledge: 'I study myself. … That is my metaphysics; that is my physics' (III.13; T1050, S1217 [821]). This Montaignean contempt for metaphysics must thus be borne in mind when one posits a sharp distinction between Nietzsche's philosophy in the *Untimely Meditations* and *Human, All Too Human*. To be sure, metaphysical language is at times prominent in the latter. For instance, in 'Schopenhauer as Educator', Nietzsche claims that 'man is necessary for the redemption of nature from the curse of the life of the animal', as in humanity 'existence … appears no longer senseless but in its metaphysical significance' (SE 5). But as discussed earlier, at the very heart of both 'On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life' and 'Schopenhauer as Educator' we find, as in the *Essays*, the recognition of the essential importance of self-knowledge. And if one considers the powerful influence that Montaigne obviously exerts on Nietzsche at this time—in terms of his break from Schopenhauer and Wagner—if one takes the essayist as Nietzsche's most esteemed 'educator', then the undermining of metaphysics via a psychological approach in *Human, All Too Human* becomes readily intelligible.

Montaigne alerts Nietzsche to the suspicion that metaphysical explanations are, to use Berry's phrase, 'psychologically suspect'.[10] *Human, All Too Human* follows the *Essays* in 'exposing the psychological drives behind metaphysical philosophy', and in discussing 'the dogmas of religion and metaphysics in similarly "pathological" terms'.[11]

---

[9] Given that they reject any kind of metaphysical understanding of the world and thus deny that we can say anything meaningful about 'the world as it really is', it would seem that, when both thinkers characterize the world as 'becoming', they are offering an account of reality that could be called '*negative realism*': 'becoming is indeed a feature of the world … but it is precisely and only this world's indeterminableness' (Richardson, "Nietzsche on Time and Becoming", p. 212). According to such a view, 'the world is "flux" or "chaos" insofar as it has no determinate structure in itself. All properties … are imposed by … us' (ibid.). Looking beyond *Human, All Too Human*, however, Nietzsche moves to a position that is more radical still: 'it's not just that the noumenon is indeterminate, but that there is and can be no such thing' (ibid.). Understood in this way, becoming 'refers … to the non-existence of any real or noumenal world. This carries us out of realism' (ibid.).
[10] Berry, "The Pyrrhonian Revival in Montaigne and Nietzsche", p. 499.
[11] Ibid., p. 514.

Platonic idealism, described in the *Essays* as 'soarings aloft in clouds of poetry and the babble of the gods', is, for Montaigne, symptomatic of a mind 'engulfed by … curiosity and … arrogance' (II.12; T526, S611-2 [407]).[12] Hence, rather than representing the glory of human rationality, the most supposedly transcendent elements of Platonism are founded on the 'base and earthbound'—much as Nietzsche, in *Human, All Too Human*, associates metaphysics with 'error and self-deception' (III.13; T1096, S1268 [856]). Montaigne thus concludes that 'nothing about Plato [is] so human as what is alleged for calling him divine' (ibid.). In other words, Plato's theory of the eternal Forms has little to do with unearthly wisdom and much more to do with common human fears—fears relating to death, change and destruction. In *Ecce Homo*, when Nietzsche looks back on *Human, All Too Human*, he recognizes a 'victory' over German idealism, which, he claims, provides the inspiration for his title. He explains: 'the title says "where *you* see ideal things, I see—human, oh, only all too human things!' (EH, 'HAH' 1) It is scarcely necessary to point out how remarkably this chimes with the Montaignean sentiment above. Montaigne is likewise nonplussed by Socrates' 'ecstasies and daemonizings', preferring a psychological explanation to a supernatural one, he speculates that the apparently otherworldly voice Socrates was wont to hear was in fact 'a certain thrust of the will which presented itself to him without waiting for rational argument' (I.11; T45, S45 [29]). Nietzsche also tackles this matter, but forgoes a strictly psychological analysis in favour of a medical diagnosis: 'an ear-infection', which Socrates 'only *interpreted* differently' (HAH 126). A final point to note here is in relation to pessimism ('the … inveterate vice … of old idealists' (HAH P5)). In chapter 1, it was argued that the *Essays* offered Nietzsche a corrective to the world-denying aspects of Schopenhauerian philosophy. But now it is clear that Montaigne's influence in this regard is far more significant: Montaigne not only provides Nietzsche with a counter ideal to pessimism; he also reveals the route to its overcoming—the art of psychological dissection.[13]

---

[12] 'Montaigne is concerned with showing doctrinal gaps and logical fallacies in systems of thought, but he is perhaps more interested in debunking the self-serving pride and hubris that he thinks lead many of these systems—and humanity—to absurd claims. … The heart … of the "Apology" … is his attempt to combat presumptuousness by showing the self-serving way in which it emerges from human "imagination"' (Levine, *Sensual Philosophy*, p. 31).

[13] In *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche states that psychology ('the queen of the sciences') is 'the path to the most fundamental problems' (BGE 23). For Pippin, what Nietzsche is proposing here is that 'psychology as he understands it will replace philosophy, especially metaphysics, the formerly dead or deposed queen' (*Nietzsche, Psychology, and First Philosophy*, p. 1). Going beyond Montaigne and the other French moralists, he understands the 'primacy of the "psychological" question', the

Human presumption

In the *Essays*, Montaigne's mocking dismissal of metaphysics is just a part of the much broader aim of deflating human 'presumption', the vain tendency of humans to see themselves as approaching the divine (II.12; T427, S502 [329]). He seeks to stress human irrationality rather than human rationality, and the power of both emotion and the imagination to overcome our better judgement, leading the mind to give 'birth to so many chimeras and fantastic monstrosities' (I.8; T34, S31 [21]). 'An apology for Raymond Sebond', by far the longest essay and the centrepiece of Montaigne's work, amounts to a devastating sceptical attack on our capacity for knowledge. Here, adopting Pyrrhonian arguments, he catalogues the gross limitations of human understanding: we are surpassed in many ways by the animals; human beings cannot even comprehend the inner workings of their own minds and bodies; our senses are fallible and confuse each other; the greatest minds of antiquity could come to no consensus on what is good or what leads to happiness; the senses and reason do not put us in touch with ultimate reality. Montaigne thus proposes that 'the very things which we know form part of our ignorance', concluding that human reason is 'a touchstone full of falsehood, error [and] defects' (II.12; T481, S558 [370]; ibid. T523, S608 [405]).

Nietzsche's turn to the art of psychological dissection goes hand in hand with an increasingly sceptical tone and style of argument.[14] For the sceptic, after demolishing unwarranted claims to truth, the aim of philosophical discourse is to 're-establish a basis of modest facts'.[15] In the opening sections of *Human, All Too human*, Nietzsche gives us to understand that he values 'the little unpretentious truths' far more that the 'errors handed down by metaphysical and artistic ages' (HAH 3). Yet, during the period of his middle works, as Richard Bett observes, there is very little evidence to suggest that Nietzsche was seriously studying any of the ancient sceptics.[16] The *Essays*, it appears, were the main avenue for his for sceptical reading at this time. We can thus agree with Berry that, following the publication of the *Untimely Meditations*, Nietzsche's regard for Montaigne as an exemplar is not merely 'ascribable to [the essayist's] eminence as a

---

'always presupposed "stance toward life"' at work behind every perspective (p. 12). That is to say, Nietzsche recognizes 'the primordiality of issues of values and their psychological conditions' (p. 24): 'the priority and nonreducibility of normative considerations as a condition for the intelligibility of our assertions and our actions' (p. 68).

[14] 'Nietzsche's rhapsodic and aphoristic style, holding in balance that which is thought, shows similarities with the skeptical language' (Urs Sommer, "Nihilism and Skepticism in Nietzsche", p. 251).

[15] Heitsch, *Practising Reform in Montaigne's Essais*, p. 148.

[16] Bett, "Nietzsche on the Skeptics and Nietzsche as Skeptic", p. 67.

… psychologist': '[He] is also keenly attuned to Montaigne's scepticism'.[17] Indeed, the parallels between the 'Apology' and 'Of First and Last Things', the first chapter of *Human, All Too Human*, are striking, insofar as we see in both a trenchant scepticism directed against philosophical and religious dogmatism, a scepticism emphasizing the 'errors' constitutive to reason itself.

Suspicious of the very foundations of knowledge, Nietzsche's critique focuses on the capacity for language, unique to humans, the basis of our reason and said to give us a higher status than any other species.[18] As in his unpublished essay 'On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense', he argues that language offers no true representation of the world: with words, we merely give 'designations' to things and juxtapose one world to another of our own making (HAH 11). The belief that language puts us in possession of knowledge thus amounts to the propagation of a 'tremendous error' (ibid.). He indicts logic and mathematics in a similar fashion: 'here we are already fabricating beings, unities that do not exist' (HAH 19) Following Montaigne, he maintains that what seem to be the highest human achievements are in fact 'the fundamental errors of mankind', with the consequence that 'the whole of human life is sunk deeply in untruth' (HAH 18, 34). Montaigne was well aware of the limitations of language and its failure to map reality ('Our speech, like everything else, has its defects and weaknesses. Most of the world's squabbles are occasioned by grammar' (II.12; T508, S590 [392]) and of how the human mind, 'imposing … false Forms' of its own 'invention', distorts reality (II.12; T517, S601 [400]).[19] In this way, both thinkers 'concede that life is impossible without compromising oneself with error and illusion'.[20] Moreover, they agree that, with our linguistic and logical schemes, we seek to evade the lesson of flux, engaging in an impossible attempt to stabilize the world of becoming; but 'the more tightly you squeeze anything the nature of which is to flow, the more you will lose what you try to retain in your grasp' (II.12; T586, S680 [455]).[21]

---

[17] Berry, *Nietzsche and the Ancient Skeptical Tradition*, p. 88.

[18] In their attack on human presumption, both thinkers also attempt to subvert the notion of a stark separation between human and animal life. Closing the putative gap between the human and the animal, they emphasize humanity's continuity with the rest of nature (see discussion Chapter 3, Section I).

[19] 'There are names and there are things. … The name is not part of that thing nor part of its substance: it is a foreign body attached to that thing; it is quite outside it (II.16; T601, S702 [468]). For Alan Levine, Montaigne, 'raising questions about the nature and fundamental inadequacy of language', anticipates 'the linguistic turn' in philosophy (*Sensual Philosophy*, pp. 87-8).

[20] Donnellan, *Nietzsche and the French Moralists*, p. 24.

[21] 'Becoming entails the falsity of both our scientific and commonsense theories of the world. It does this by falsifying (showing to be false or inapplicable) certain concepts that belong to the deep

But there are other, more compelling reasons for supposing that Nietzsche takes inspiration from the scepticism of the *Essays*. For I argue, against Berry, that it is not Montaigne's Pyrrhonism that attracts Nietzsche, but on the contrary, the *Essays* function as a model for him precisely to the extent that they depart from Pyrrhonism. Nietzsche saw well what many Montaigne scholars now recognize: that Montaigne, although evincing a sceptical orientation, was certainly no Pyrrhonist. The scepticism of the *Essays* represents a fundamental transformation of ancient scepticism: we find here no suspension of judgement, nor is the end of *ataraxia* or imperturbability ever pursued. Thus, 'if we make Montaigne heir to the Pyrrhonian tradition', we fail to appreciate 'what is new in his skepticism'.[22] Montaigne's goal is not indifference, but self-knowledge; he never gives up on the possibility that we can arrive at some understanding both of human nature and nature at large. In fact, far from wanting to suspend judgement, Montaigne, throughout the *Essays*, 'seeks to develop and refine his judgement'.[23] Like Nietzsche, he continually offers definitive statements on a whole range of issues: on the conventional foundations of morality, on the savagery of ascetic virtue, on the dangers of anti-natural, otherworldly doctrines. This is crucial to an understanding of Montaigne's attraction to Nietzsche as a sceptic, since Nietzsche denounces the complete suspension of judgement as well as the cultivation of *ataraxia* as life-denying, even nihilistic. That is to say, 'temperamentally, or in terms of the practical attitudes and ways of life that they recommend, Nietzsche and the Greek skeptics are poles apart'.[24]

In *The Wanderer and His Shadow*, Nietzsche describes Pyrrho as a 'fanatic of mistrust', asking rhetorically: 'Alas, friend! Laughing and staying silent—is that … your whole philosophy' (WS 213). Montaigne also laughs, but unlike Pyrrho, he affirms and celebrates life without reserve. Montaigne passes, while Pyrrho fails, one of Nietzsche's existential tests: 'Do you affirm this existence in the depths of your heart. … Would you be its advocate, its redeemer? For you only have to pronounce a single heartfelt Yes' (SE 3). Pyrrho's indifference, his lack of decision, is hostile to an unconditional affirmation of life, to a definitive, positive stance toward existence, and at

---

structure of all our descriptions and explanations' (Richardson, "Nietzsche on Time and Becoming", p. 211).

[22] Raga Rosaleny, "The Current Debate about Montaigne's Skepticism", p. 60.

[23] Levine, *Sensual Philosophy*, p. 72. Montaigne's scepticism involves 'a rejection of *epoche* [suspension of judgement] in favour of a constant taking of different positions' (Raga Rosaleny, "The Current Debate about Montaigne's Skepticism", p. 61).

[24] Bett, "Nietzsche on the Skeptics and Nietzsche as Skeptic", p. 68.

odds with a Dionysian pessimism. Through withdrawal and a cessation of engagement with the world, Pyrrho attempts not to overcome suffering, but to put an end to it, by attaining a state of quietude. As a consequence, for Nietzsche, the 'sceptical disposition' becomes 'a great danger to life' as soon as it overpowers 'the opposite disposition—to affirm' (GS 111). In his late notes, therefore, at a time of renewed interest in ancient scepticism owing to his reading of Victor Brochard's *Les Sceptiques Grecs* (an 'excellent study' (EH 2.3)), we find him characterizing Pyrrhonism as 'nihilist', as a 'protest of weariness', and as 'representing a state in which one is neither sick nor well, neither alive nor dead' (KSA 13: 14[99] (WP 437)). For this reason, Nietzsche favours a Montaignean scepticism, where doubt coexists with the relentless pursuit of knowledge and a heartfelt yes-saying to suffering and to life. Indeed, given the radical departure of their thought from ancient scepticism, both thinkers are equally reluctant—notwithstanding their praise of the sceptics above all other philosophers—to label themselves as such, or to count themselves as adherents to that tradition.[25]

Montaigne and Nietzsche are in complete agreement not only that it is through arrogance and delusion that we attribute absolute knowledge and pure rationality to ourselves, but also that it is by way of achievements clouded by confusion—language, mathematics, philosophy—that we have managed to raise ourselves above the animals. For both philosophers, the destruction of the notion of humanity's rationality and pre-eminence serves a highly polemical purpose: they seek to utterly negate the claims of dogmatic philosophies that offer systematic and comprehensive explanations of the nature of reality. But it also represents a move that is essential to their philosophical aims. As Richard Regosin explains, the idea that 'man must descend before he can ascend' is fundamental to the *Essays*; that is to say, 'the recognition of the boundaries of

[25] With respect to Nietzsche's refusal of the title of sceptic, we should also consider an 'important strand' in his thinking that could be described as 'non-skeptical or even anti-skeptical' (Bett, "Nietzsche on the Skeptics and Nietzsche as Skeptic", p. 71). As touched on earlier, Nietzsche comes to reject the 'legitimacy of the *concept* of "the way the world really, objectively, is"' (p. 70): 'What is "appearance" to me now! Certainly not the opposite of some essence—what could I say about any essence except name the predicates of its appearance!' (GS 54) In this sense, he doesn't share the sceptics concern about 'our being *cut off from* the true nature of things—for the very idea of "the true nature of things" is simply nonsensical in his eyes' ("Nietzsche on the Skeptics and Nietzsche as Skeptic", pp. 71-2). To what extent Montaigne prefigures Nietzsche in this regard is difficult to say. Sometimes it appears as if he wants to retain a conception of 'the way the world really is', stressing that knowledge of such a reality is beyond our grasp. In other passages, however, we find him suspicious of the very idea of 'how things are in themselves': 'Some animals … have yellow eyes exactly like sufferers from jaundice. … It is probable that the colours of objects appear different to them and to us. Who judges them right? Nobody claims that the essence of anything relates only to its effect on Man' (II.12; T582, S675 [452]).

human capacity … is the absolute prerequisite to the return to the self'.[26] The goal of self-knowledge is thwarted when we endeavour to transcend our humanity and grasp for the divine. The fantasy of redemption and transcendence is also the danger that Nietzsche recognizes in romantic art. Like Montaigne, however, he wishes to promote a philosophical way of life that 'embraces full immanence'.[27] In *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche thus states that while he was under the spell of romantic pessimism his 'knowledge was completely devoid of *realities*, and "idealities" were not worth a damn' (again, echoing the *Essays* when Montaigne declares that he seeks 'satisfaction' solely 'in realities … solid ones at that [*la realité, encores bien massive*]' (III.9; T978, S1130 [764])). For Nietzsche, it was only by relinquishing such idealities that he began to stop mistaking himself and was enabled to commence the essential work of self-understanding: 'That lowermost self, buried and silenced … slowly woke up … and … *started talking again*' (EH, 'HAH' 3-4).

The philosopher's task

The redirection in Nietzsche's thought announced with the publication of *Human, All Too Human* is presaged in many passages of the *Untimely Meditations*, and particularly in 'Schopenhauer as Educator'. In the preface written to accompany the reissuing of *The Wanderer and His Shadow* in 1886, Nietzsche asserts that in the third *Meditation* he was already 'deep in the midst of … destructive analysis', his critique of pessimism was well underway, and that he no longer believed in Schopenhauer (all, by the way, clearly signalled by his embrace of Montaigne) (HAH II P1). Nietzsche therefore insists that *Human, All Too Human* represents a natural progression in his thinking. This claim is lent even greater plausibility if one considers the conception of the philosopher outlined in 'Schopenhauer as Educator'. As we have seen, Nietzsche conceives the philosopher as an individual of radical independence who liberates him- or herself from the 'insufficiencies of the age'. Consequently, such an individual is 'permeated with the awareness of what sufferings must spring from his truthfulness … he will have to be an enemy to those he loves and the institutions that produced him' (SE 4). Hence, Nietzsche's liberation from Wagner and Schopenhauer, the defining influences of his

[26] Regosin, The *Matter of My Book*, pp. 53-4.
[27] Norman, "Nietzsche and the Early Romantics", p. 515.

early life, and his retirement from academic life, allows him to fulfil his vision of what it is to live an authentic philosophical life.

With *Human, All Too Human*, Nietzsche's critical engagement with his philosophical and cultural heritage begins in earnest, his 'destructive analysis' takes centre stage, he begins to write without admiration or reverence for the forces that shaped him. In 'On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life', he states that there is a 'boundary at which the past has to be forgotten if it is not to become a gravedigger of the present' (HL 1). *Human, All Too Human*, Nietzsche claims, grew out of a period in his life in which his 'illness '*required*' him 'to forget' (EH, 'HAH' 4). Yet again, Montaigne can be seen as a major inspiration. There are striking similarities between 'An apology for Raymond Sebond' and *Human, All Too Human*, in terms of what they signify in the respective trajectories of each philosophers' writing. Like *Human, All Too Human*, the 'Apology' is not just an incisive attack on human presumption; it is also an astonishing 'declaration of independence'.[28] Montaigne both abandons and satirizes the core beliefs and assumptions of Stoical humanism, assumptions to the fore in preceding essays, if occasionally tacitly rejected. According to Stoical humanism, rationality is the defining characteristic of humankind, the capacity to subdue, through the application of reason, the appetitive side of life our unique feature and beyond the ken of other species. In Book I of the *Essays*, Cato's stoicism is held up as the pinnacle of human achievement: Cato 'was truly a model which Nature chose to show how far human nature and fortitude can reach' (I.37; T227, S260 [171]). But like Nietzsche, Montaigne ultimately comes to reject the philosophy of his earliest exemplar. In the 'Apology', in the context of Montaigne's focus on human irrationality, Cato's stoic composure is mocked: 'Cato could wring the neck of Death and Destiny, but if ever he had been bitten by a mad dog … he would have been overcome by fear and terror' (II.12; T532, S619 [412]). The 'Apology' also marks, as well as a break with Stoical humanism, a repudiation of the scholasticism of medieval academic philosophy. Having gone through a critique of Aristotle, 'the god of scholastic science', Montaigne concludes that 'like any other doctrine it may be false' (ibid. T521, S606 [403]). By the end of the 'Apology', Montaigne has thus achieved a thoroughgoing independence, which gives him the intellectual space to pursue self-knowledge in the remainder of the *Essays*.

[28] Frame, *Montaigne*, p. 180.

From now on, Montaigne will eschew the philosophies of the past as the basis of his writing, in favour of the more solid foundation of his own ‘experience’.

Section II: Experimental Philosophy and the Removal of Bad Conscience

Experience and experiment

For both Montaigne and Nietzsche, it is primarily through lived experience, and not reason, that the most important philosophical questions must be approached and probed. The *Essays* explore an astonishingly diverse range of human experience, from the apparently banal ('On smells') to the most consequential ('To philosophize is to learn how to die'). Every conceivable avenue of study is considered a legitimate path to self-knowledge: 'All topics of discussion are equally productive to me. I could write about a fly' (III.5; T854, S990 [668]). Montaigne views his response to any subject as potentially self-revealing, as possibly contributing a new detail or shade of colour to his continuously developing, if ever provisional, self-portrait. However, the determination to ground the *Essays* in concrete experience also follows naturally from his Hellenistic understanding of philosophy as a practice rooted in the life of the philosopher: 'I examine nothing, I study nothing, but me; and if I do study anything else, it is so as to apply it to myself at once, or more correctly, within myself' (II.6; T358, S424 [273]). To live philosophically is to use the raw material of experience to cultivate the self and transform one's character.

In the 'Apology', in the course of Montaigne's sceptical attack on human rationality, he denounces reason as a font of error and confusion, brushing the assumptions and commonplaces of Stoical humanism aside. With reason no longer taken as authoritative, Montaigne begins to place his trust in experiential knowledge. Later in Book II, he makes what is perhaps the most famous—and controversial—claim of the *Essays*: 'I have not made my book any more than it has made me'; it is 'a book of one substance with its author [*livre consubstantiel à son auteur*]' (II.18; T648, S755 [504]). Such is the faithfulness with which his writing documents life as he experiences it, Montaigne suggests that the *Essays* may be understood as disclosing the living man. As we move to Book III, he no longer looks to the philosophers of the past to direct his thinking—be they of a Stoical, Epicurean or Sceptical bent. But rather, with greater and greater confidence, he considers matters before the tribunal of his own experience. Thus, when discussing an argument put forward by Plutarch, in an instance where, uncharacteristically, Montaigne refuses his exemplar's wisdom, he declares: 'I know it

not by argument but by compelling experience' (III.6; T876, S1018 [685]). Fittingly, given the tenor of what has gone before, Montaigne ends his work with an essay entitled 'On experience', which offers a distillation of his philosophical outlook. In its opening lines, he adumbrates the epistemological method that has guided his self-study from the end of the 'Apology': 'No desire is more natural than the desire for knowledge. We assay all the means that can lead us to it. When reason fails us we make use of experience' (III.13; T1041, S1207 [815]). Montaigne's philosophy represents a thoroughgoing art of living, a way of life in which everything one does is integrated into a constantly evolving, never-to-completed, personally tailored practice: 'Were I a good pupil there is enough, I find, in my own experience to make me wise' (ibid. T1051, S1218 [822]).

How appropriate, then, that Montaigne should be Nietzsche's model as he outlines his conception of the philosopher in 'Schopenhauer as Educator'. Nietzsche could well be describing Montaigne when he states that the philosopher is a person for whom 'most of the instruction he receives he has to acquire out of himself' (SE 7). As we have seen, much of what Nietzsche has to say in 'Schopenhauer as Educator' constitutes a re-articulation of ideas already expressed in the *Essays*. Hence, when Nietzsche informs us that 'no one can construct for you the bridge upon which precisely you must cross the stream of life, no one but yourself alone' (SE 1), this echoes Montaigne's more provocatively phrased admonition in 'On experience': 'Even the life of Caesar is less exemplary for us than our own. … We tell ourselves all that we chiefly need: let us listen to it' (III.13; T1051, S1218 [822]). Following the *Untimely Meditations*, as Nietzsche proceeds to flesh out his understanding of the philosopher, the picture he paints of the exemplary philosophical life retains a distinctly Montaignean colouration. In *Human, All Too Human,* he instructs us as follows: 'serve yourself as your own source of experience' and thereby your own life 'will acquire the value of an instrument and means of knowledge' (HAH 292). And later in the same work, he praises those rare individuals or 'free spirits'—good pupils, in the Montaignean sense—who 'know how to manage their experiences … so that these become an arable soil that bears fruit three times a year' (HAH 627).

Montaigne's imprint continues to be discernible even as Nietzsche concludes the free spirit trilogy. In *The Gay Science,* he sums up the philosophical outlook of the free spirit thus: '"*Life as a means to knowledge*"—with this principle in one's heart one cannot only live bravely but also *live gaily and laugh gaily*' (GS 324). However, what is

most striking is the extent to which Nietzsche learns from Montaigne 'a technique that would become a primary feature of his psychology—and of his philosophy in general: the *experimental* method'.[29] Throughout the works of Nietzsche's middle period, he repeatedly refers to the free spirit as an 'experimenter', and their mode of thought as 'experimental' philosophizing. In the section just quoted, he explains that the free spirits' liberation consists in the realization 'that life could be an experiment for the knowledge-seeker'. But of course, famously, this is precisely the manner in which Montaigne frames his entire philosophical project—and he invented the '*essai*' form, that is, the form of the 'trial', 'attempt' or 'test', as the most suitable means for its presentation. Montaigne frequently describes his self-study as a kind of 'assaying', and in Book II, explains the purpose of his writing as 'purely an assay of my natural … abilities' (II.10; T387, S457 [296]). Montaigne views self-knowledge as growing out of a shrewd engagement with the experiences of one's own life, but this is experience enriched and expanded by a willingness to seek out opportunities for bold self-testing and sustained self-experimentation. As regards Montaigne's understanding of the 'essay' and what his stylistic innovation entails, 'the twin senses of trial or testing and experience or experiment run through the whole fabric' of his work.[30] It is telling that, having signalled Montaigne out as a major influence in the *Untimely Meditations*, Nietzsche launches his own, singular philosophical style in *Human, All Too Human*, a hybrid form of essay and aphorism, the idiosyncratic style of the free spirit, who possesses 'the dangerous privilege of living *experimentally* and of being allowed to offer itself to adventure' (HAH P4).[31]

It may be objected, however, that the free spirits' experimentalism owes more to Nietzsche's growing respect for the merits of the scientific enterprise than to the life and writings of a 16th century French essayist. There is no doubt that much of what Nietzsche has to say on the free spirit is shaped by the positivism of his middle works. But what Nietzsche means by science (*Wissenschaft*) is human enquiry understood in the widest sense and including the psychological and moral sciences—as a matter of

[29] Parkes, *Composing the Soul*, p. 4.
[30] Sayce, *The Essays of Montaigne*, p. 22.
[31] In his examination of Montaigne's aphoristic style, Donnellan suggests that the *Essays* 'anticipate Nietzsche's own decision to eschew the pretentions of the systematic philosophers for the sake of individualized reactions to various problems'. In addition, the 'open form of the essay' offered Montaigne 'the most appropriate means to explore his own nature in general … [granting him] the freedom to take random samples from the Heraclitean flux of existence in open-ended experimentalism' (*Nietzsche and the French Moralists*, p. 134-6).

fact, for him, the latter are primary. After all, in *Human, All Too Human*, the free spirit is especially to be welcomed because of the dearth of true psychologists, and in terms of experimentation, they are, in essence, 'adventurers and circumnavigators of that inner world called man' (HAH P7). What Montaigne represents for Nietzsche is a prefiguration of these 'aeronauts of the spirit', who are intent on conducting 'numerous novel experiments … in ways of life' (D 575, 164). In the *Essays*, Montaigne examines and criticizes the various doctrines and practices of the schools of Greco-Roman thought, and tests them in the only way worth considering, as far as Nietzsche is concerned: 'with all evaluations of the past … one has voluntarily *to live through* them once again … if one is at last to possess the *right* to pass them through the sieve' (D 61). For this reason, among others, Nietzsche claims that reading a philosopher of Montaigne's ilk moves us closer to the 'spirit' of the sages of antiquity (WS 214).[32]

No less than Montaigne, Nietzsche understands the substance of his philosophy as intimately related to the circumstances of his life. In the preface to the second volume of *Human, All Too Human*, he reveals: 'My writings speak *only* of my overcomings: "I" am in them, together with everything that was inimical to me' (HAH II P1). If Nietzsche's middle works document a 'victory' over romantic pessimism and its metaphysical foundations, Montaigne's third book of the *Essays* represents a complete emancipation from the value system of Stoical humanism. Again, 'On experience' brings this home most forcefully. An early essay, 'To philosophize is to learn how to die' (I.20), treats with some respect the Stoic notion that one's life is defined by the manner of one's death, that supreme honour is to be found in meeting death with calmness and composure. In other words, for the Stoic, a good death should be the ultimate objective of one's life. However, in 'On experience' Montaigne rejects this Stoic ideal and strikes an altogether different note: 'death is indeed the ending of life, but not therefore its End. … Life must be its own objective, its own purpose' (III.12; T1028, S1191 [805]). The view espoused here is informed by nearly twenty years more experience and written with the torments of advancing old age as a backdrop. As the

[32] We continue to see Nietzsche's preferred mode of philosophizing characterized as experimental even into his mature works. Here, for instance, is the famous announcement in *Beyond Good and Evil*: 'A new species of philosophers is coming up: I venture to baptize them … *attempters* [*Versucher*]' (BGE 42). Lampert explains the significance of this aphorism as follows: 'The new philosophers are essayists whose natural mode of expression is the essay or aphorism, the mode mastered not only by Montaigne but by his great essayist followers, Bacon and Descartes, and by Emerson, whose essays Nietzsche studied in the German version entitled *Versuche* and which trace their experimental method to Montaigne' (*Nietzsche's Task*, pp. 95-6).

Essays progress and his health declines, Montaigne comes to value and savour life more and more. But even his sufferings are approached experimentally and mined for wisdom: 'At the darkest moments of paroxysm I explore myself' (II.37; T740, S862 [577]). For Montaigne, his self-portrait must take into consideration all aspects of his life, whether good or bad, pleasurable or painful. Nietzsche has Montaigne in mind when he writes: 'The fairest virtue of the great thinker is the magnanimity with which, as a man of knowledge, he intrepidly … often with sublime mockery and smiling … offers himself and his life as a sacrifice' (D 459).

The free spirits' experimental philosophizing goes hand in hand with a Dionysian attitude to life. Nietzsche advocates the affirmation of the totality of one's being. No part of the self is to be denied or suppressed, but has to be faced and scrutinized. The free spirit is willing to experiment with the most threatening materials: 'we … expose ourselves to our own deserts, swamps and icy mountains' (D 343). What the free spirit fears most is narrowness, the refusal of the diverse and difficult paths that lead to self-knowledge. Instead, the free spirit seeks 'that inner spaciousness and indulgence of superabundance which excludes the danger that the spirit may even on its own road perhaps lose itself … and remain seated intoxicated in some corner or other' (HAH P4). For Nietzsche, Schopenhauer became lost in his own suffering and despair at life. In consequence, Schopenhauerian philosophy is limited and constrained to the extent that it does 'not constitute the passionate history of a soul', but merely 'the description of a *character*' (D 481). With respect to Montaigne, however, that 'mightiest of souls', the *Essays* present us with the passionate biography of a whole person. Montaigne aims to 'reveal' not a philosophical theory or system but his 'own self' (I.26; T147, S167 [109]). He strives to make every side of himself known, however shameful or morally suspect: 'I hardly dare tell of the vanity and the weakness which I find in myself' (II.12; T548, S637 [425]). Montaigne is often taken to be a Stoic or Sceptic or Epicurean, or an amalgam of each. But perhaps it is more illuminating to understand him as Nietzsche did, as a free spirit who possesses 'a careful spirit of enquiry about everything', allied to a Dionysian openness and acceptance (I.26; T155, S175 [115]).

Morality of custom

Montaigne regards self-knowledge as the foundation of the ethical life; self-study and self-testing have significance only insofar as they offer guidance on moral action. He bemoans that fact that, all too often, our ethical ideals are constructed on 'high philosophical peaks on which no human being can settle' (III.9; T967, S1118 [756]). Therefore Montaigne's war on human vanity and presumption, his rejection of metaphysics and his denial of our claims to pure rationality all reflect different aspects of his endeavour to bring ethics back down to ground level: 'my conscience is happy with itself—not as the conscience of an angel … but as behoves the conscience of a man' (III.2; T784, S909 [612]). Much of Montaigne's writing thus involves a penetrating investigation of the basis of our moral sensibilities. Rather as Montaigne's self-portraiture progresses to a study of 'our manners and motives', Nietzsche's art of psychological dissection moves from a concern with his own 'overcomings' to 'an investigation and digging out of … our *faith in morality*' (D P2). It is evident that Montaigne's psychological analysis of classical ethical intuitions exerted an enormous influence on Nietzsche; indeed, in *The Wanderer and His Shadow*, he looks forward to a time when Montaigne will be regarded as a forerunner and signpost to a higher form of ethical ideal—an ideal more indebted to Socrates than the Bible (WS 86). What both Nietzsche and Montaigne seek is an appropriately human morality, tailored to our specific endowment. To this end, the 'free spirit' will conduct 'numerous novel experiments … in ways of life', with the hoped for result that 'a tremendous burden of bad conscience shall be expelled from the world' (D 164).

A close reading of Nietzsche's writing from *Human, All Too Human* to *The Gay Science* leaves one in little doubt as to why he would propose Montaigne as a forerunner to more enlightened moralists of the future: throughout these works Nietzsche's more psychologically acute observations on the vexed question of the origin of our moral sensations are, very often, expansions or refinements of views expressed in the *Essays*. Looking back over his works of the previous ten years, when they were reissued in 1886, Nietzsche claims that what most readers found distinctive in his writings of that time was an alarming 'mistrust' toward 'morality' (HAH P1). Although less blatantly and boldly subversive, the *Essays* also direct a deeply suspicious gaze over the moral realm and attempt to explode any notion of an absolute morality, metaphysically grounded. For both thinkers, morality owes its origin to the all-too-human—to cultural habits, ingrained practices and unquestioned traditions. But as a result of the power of

custom, Montaigne claims, our moral intuitions appear 'to belong to our genus, to be natural' (I.23; T114, S130 [83]). The values we hold in 'high esteem', however, are neither natural nor necessary: they were 'planted in our souls by our forefathers' (ibid.). This is a view Nietzsche often voices in his middle works. In *The Wanderer and His Shadow*, almost paraphrasing Montaigne, he proposes that 'good-natured', moral individuals inherit 'from their forefathers the good *mode of action* but not the reasons for it' (WS 41).

This last point is crucial. For both, moral laws are first respected not because they are reasonable or useful but *because they are laws*. Reverence for custom thus provides the basis for ethical precepts and, Montaigne insists, '[t]hey have no other' (III.13; T1049, S1216 [821]). Similarly, in *Daybreak*, Nietzsche states: 'the *chief proposition*: morality is nothing other (therefore *no more*!) than obedience to customs, of whatever kind they may be' (D 9). (That Montaigne is very much to the fore as an influence on Nietzsche's thinking at this time is evidenced by the fact that, as Williams notes, a few aphorisms later he quotes directly from the *Essays*—albeit, on a matter only tangentially related (D 46).[33] Since moral attitudes are deep-rooted, 'we suck them in with our mothers' milk', and encouraged by society, 'we think that it is reason which is unhinged whenever custom is' (I.23; T114, S130 [83]).[34] More than this even, moral laws, Montaigne later suggests, come to be attain an almost 'mystical' status (III.13; T1049, S1216 [821]). On this point, Nietzsche again follows the essayist's lead. Our veneration of custom, he argues, is fuelled by a 'superstitious' fear, a fear of an 'incomprehensible, indefinite power, of something more than personal', and the 'good mood' typically induced by acting in accordance with tradition we interpret as 'the effect of a god who promises success' (D 9, 28).

As customs are passed down from generation to generation, the mode of action enjoined is not adopted through mere obedience but becomes habitual. As a consequence, shrouded in superstition, 'merely human opinions become accepted … and take on authority and trust like religion' (II.12; T520, S605 [403]). In this way, tradition becomes inner compulsion, and compulsion unrelated to the specific conditions that gave rise to the tradition in the first place, now long forgotten. But gradually, *ex post facto* rationalizations and justifications are constructed and reason is

[33] Williams, *Nietzsche and the French*, p. 71.
[34] Vivarelli draws our attention to a note from September 1876 where Nietzsche adopts this metaphor to specifically capture the habituation of religious belief: from our earliest years, we drink in 'the milk of faith' (KSA 8: 18 [11]) ("Montaigne und der 'Freie Geist'", p. 89).

invoked to explicate prevailing behaviour. Montaigne explains: 'We parrot the paraphernalia of supporting arguments … everybody vies with each other to … prop up received belief with all the powers of reason' (ibid.). Accordingly, Montaigne is of the opinion that to penetrate the accretions of dubious reasoning and the follies of superstition and return to the true source of our moral values is a near impossible task, particularly when we are inclined to mistake what we are looking for: 'laws, like our rivers, get greater and nobler as they roll along: follow them back upstream to their sources and all you find is a tiny spring, hardly recognisable' (ibid. T567, S658 [440]). It is thus, he warns, 'perilous to go back to their origins', as we must be willing to recognize the distressing fact that laws are 'always' made 'by men' and 'often made by fools' (III.13; T1049, S1216 [821]). Few, however, are ready to accept such 'vain beginnings'. Most are content to apply their intellectual ingenuity to the task of providing the most rational (and therefore the most pleasing) account of existing societal norms. The upshot being that 'nobody tries to shake them' and determine 'whether the roots are sound' (II.12; T520-1, S605 [403]). But the roots of morality interest Nietzsche, and in order to conduct his examination he takes up and develops much of what Montaigne has to say on the topic.

Although Nietzsche's determination to examine moral sensations is announced in *Human, All Too Human*, it is in *Daybreak*, he claims, that the 'campaign against *morality*' truly begins (EH, 'D' 1). This campaign constitutes not so much a critique of various moral systems as an attack on the very notion of morality itself. In contrast to those who would wish to render our moral obligations 'unassailable', Nietzsche is 'pessimistic even into the realm of morality, even to the point of going beyond faith in morality' (D P4). For moral optimists like Kant, who understand moral claims as categorical, unconditional and absolute, the idea that morality in its original form is merely obedience to custom—and in that case relative, conditional, and circumscribed—represents a most egregious 'slander'. Such a notion deprives morality of much of its 'grandeur' (ibid.). Since, if laws are often made by fools—Nietzsche draws out the necessary implication of Montaigne's thought—a 'sting of conscience' frequently amounts to nothing more than 'a piece of stupidity' (WS 38). When we follow our conscience, we may well be guided by the errors, prejudices and fantasies of previous generations, but as a result of habituation, we *feel* our actions to be right. As Nietzsche says in *Daybreak*: 'The inspiration born of a feeling is the grandchild of a judgement—and often a false judgement!—and in any event not a child of your own'

(D 35). Like Montaigne, Nietzsche wants to force home the unsettling notion that our conscience is 'not the voice of God in the heart of man but the voice of some men in man' (WS 52). Hence, when we attempt the difficult journey back upstream to the source of our moral feelings, we find that the more progress we make '*the less significant does the origin appear*' (D 44).

For Nietzsche, in order to understand our ethical attitudes and behaviours, we must recognize the crucial distinction between moral feelings and moral concepts. This is so because, as argued in *Daybreak*, 'the history of our moral feelings is quite different from that of our moral concepts' (D 34). The essence of the distinction is that the 'former are powerful *before* the action, the latter especially after the action in face of the need to pronounce upon it' (ibid.). Although the positing of such a difference represents an advance on the *Essays*, much of Nietzsche's exposition of the matter is continuous with Montaigne's understanding of how moral thinking progresses. Indeed, it could be said that Nietzsche's analysis brings to light a distinction latent to the *Essays*. For Montaigne, our moral feelings develop from an early age as we begin to follow 'the manners approved and received' about us, growing stronger until such time as we 'cannot without remorse' free ourselves to disregard or flout such behaviour (I.23; T114, S130 [83]).[35] Montaigne holds that only then, once our moral feelings have become so powerful as to seem inevitable, do we endeavour to use 'all the powers of reason'—in other words, construct moral concepts—to account for those feelings. Similarly, Nietzsche states that moral feelings are 'clearly … transmitted in this way: children observe in adults inclinations and aversions to certain actions', so that 'later in life they find themselves full of these acquired and well-exercised affects' (D 34). This leads to the situation where, out of 'decency', we then try and justify these affects not because of the degree of their intensity but because, 'as a rational being, one has to have reasons for one's For and Against' (ibid.). Therefore, both Montaigne and Nietzsche imply that our moral concepts are destined to be in error, in the sense that they are unrelated to the true roots of moral emotion; our moral concepts account for our moral feelings certainly, but only by mistaking them. For, Nietzsche explains, moral feelings are not the 'unities' moral concepts would suggest, but are—appropriating Montaigne's analogy—'rivers with a hundred tributaries and sources' (HAH 14).

[35] Nietzsche quotes this passage directly in a note penned in 1884 (KSA 11: 26[291]).

Cruelty and conscience

In his middle period, Nietzsche strives to get behind or 'tunnel' underneath traditional moral concepts, so as to reveal the real basis of moral action. The fundamental importance of such an investigation, he claims, stems from the fact that 'the errors of the greatest philosophers usually have their point of departure in a false explanation of certain human actions and sensations' (HAH 37). And for Nietzsche it is beyond question that the most significant of those errors has been 'an erroneous analysis … of the so-called unegoistic actions' (ibid.). An almost unwavering conviction in the history of moral philosophy has been the notion that, to be considered moral, an action must be undertaken for non-egoistic motives. Morality is thus understood to have its origin in the compassionate, altruistic side of human nature. However, if one believes, as Nietzsche does, that morality has its beginnings in obedience to the customs of one's time and place, then being moral, in the most primitive sense, has little to do with the 'antithesis' between the 'egoistic and unegoistic' and much more to do with the difference between '"in accordance with custom" and "in defiance of custom"' (HAH 96). Consequently, when we take moral feelings as being sourced in the non-egoistic, Nietzsche deems it a misunderstanding of the way in which fear of authority originally shaped human behaviour. In fact, not only does he not see selflessness as the driver of moral action, he finds the very idea of the non-egoistic incomprehensible.

Hence, Nietzsche's pessimism regarding morality reflects not so much the rejection of the possibility of moral action as it does the denial of the presuppositions of traditional moral theorizing. As he says in *Daybreak*: 'I deny morality as I deny alchemy, that is, I deny their premises: but I do not deny that there have been alchemists who believed in these premises' (D 103). In a sense, Nietzsche's ultimate aim is to show the egoistic (and therefore, according to how morality is typically understood, non-moral) basis of morality and explode the pleasing fiction of selfless behaviour: 'if only those actions are moral which are performed for the sake of another and only for his sake … then there are no moral actions' (D 148). Although Montaigne's exploration and critique of the classical conception of virtue leads him to endorse far less devastating conclusions—unlike Nietzsche, he does not explicitly question the coherence of free will and thus of moral responsibility—nonetheless, his analysis foregoes the association of moral worth with altruistic motives. Montaigne overturns the values of Stoicism by proposing that 'voluptuous pleasure' is the true end of virtue. The *Essays* thus prepare the ground for Nietzsche's re-evaluation of 'egoistic' actions, a

'counter-reckoning' that will restore 'goodwill' towards such actions and, thereby, deprive individuals of '*their bad conscience*' (ibid.). To be serious and tenable, Nietzsche argues, moral philosophy of the future must recognize that there is no 'profound and intrinsic difference' between those actions 'decried as egoistic' and those praised as selfless (ibid.). When probed carefully, he maintains, so-called selfless actions turn out to be inherently and inescapably self-regarding.

It is Montaigne's bold questioning of some of our most cherished moral beliefs that has Nietzsche deem him a forerunner to the free spirit. In the preface to *Daybreak*, he claims that, hitherto, the seemingly irrefutable legitimacy of deep-seated moral assumptions has tended to 'frighten off critical hands' (D P3). The consequence has been that, very often, when developing their moral systems, 'philosophers were building under the seduction of morality', aiming not at 'truth' but at '*majestic moral structures*' (ibid.). Not Montaigne, however. When Montaigne looks to human nature, what he finds as its most defining characteristic is not selflessness or compassion but cruelty. If 'each of us were to sound our inner depths', he claims, not only would we discover 'that most of our desires are nurtured at other people's expense' but, worse still, we would also be obliged to concede that even 'in the midst of compassion we feel deep down some … pricking of malicious pleasure at seeing others suffer' (I.22; T106, S121 [77]; III.1; T768, S892 [599]). For Montaigne, cruelty is at the centre of our psychological makeup, undeniable and ineradicable. The atrocities of the civil wars, in which both sides exhaust all their powers of ingenuity in thinking up 'unusual tortures and new forms of murder', make plain to him the immense satisfaction we derive from inflicting pain on others. In view of this, he is forced to conclude: 'Nature herself has attached to Man something which goads him on towards inhumanity' (II.11; T412, S485 [316]).

Considering the fundamental—though seldom acknowledged—role that Montaigne believes cruelty plays in our lives, a major theme of the *Essays* is the extent to which delight in suffering and brutality animates our moral behaviour. First off, the process of internalizing the rules and precepts of society is painful, with the conscience often functioning as an instrument of psychological self-torture: 'It makes us betray, accuse and fight against ourselves. … [I]t leads us to witness against ourselves' (II.5; T346, S412 [264]). Only by way of the torments of guilt does a morality of custom take hold and become authoritative. And cruelty is involved not only in the demands that society places on its members but also in the excessive self-discipline individuals are prepared, in the service of virtue, to practice on themselves. Time and again, he stresses

the harshness of the various moral frameworks of Greco-Roman philosophy, Stoicism in particular. Speaking of the supreme practitioners of the latter, he advises: 'Let us not attempt to follow such examples … there is too much strain, too much savagery' (III.10; T993, S1148 [777]). Self-knowledge has taught him that the Stoic ideal of virtue is based on a false picture of humanity, as approaching the divine rather than at one with animals, that achieving the state of imperturbability required for living strictly in accordance with reason is possible only by denying one's humanity. Beneath the austere doctrines of the Stoics and their obsession with virtue, Montaigne detects an unwholesome pleasure in self-cruelty. Virtue has definite limits, he insists, and all actions that exceed those limits 'are open to sinister interpretations' (II.2; T329, S389 [250]).

Nietzsche brings a suspicious and cynical eye to bear on those interpretations that would appeal to notions of compassion or selflessness to explain moral behaviour, and in this he is clearly informed by the *Essays* exploration of morality's origins in the more disquieting aspects of human nature. Nietzsche builds on Montaigne's insights and 'is positively obsessed with revealing the primal cruelty that is masked in morality'.[36] In *Daybreak*, he describes cruelty as 'one of the oldest festive joys of mankind', and proposes that 'those tremendous eras of "morality of custom"' were periods 'in which suffering counted as virtue, cruelty counted as virtue' (D 18). While Montaigne is content to point out the masochistic nature of the individual conscience, Nietzsche goes deeper to explain that conscience originally developed as a means to preserve the interests of the community, which is to say that the conscience in no way is aimed at promoting the happiness of the individual. That our conscience often betrays us reflects the historical reality that the most powerful moral intuitions can be traced back to a custom, under which 'the enduring advantage of the community is to take unconditional precedence over the advantage of the individual … even over his survival' (AOM 89). Thus, for Nietzsche, individual suffering is not only the evitable consequence of the establishment of laws and traditions but also the implicit end of our most sophisticated moral theories: 'the "proud sufferer" is still the highest type of man' (D 425). This calls to mind the following comment of Montaigne's, regarding the sages of Greco-Roman philosophy: 'those physicians of the soul … as though plotting together, can find no other way to cure us … than by torment, pain and tribulation'.

[36] Safranski, *Nietzsche,* p. 187.

And—stressing the necessary connection between virtue and suffering—he goes on to venture that 'if a man's health and happiness were made keener by fasting … it would cease to be a salutary prescription' (I.30; T198, S226 [148]).

Nietzsche traces the progress of morality through many stages, from obedience to custom to morality as social utility to, higher still, morality as the command of an unconditional duty. And he argues that as morality develops, far from being eliminated, the cruelty involved becomes more civilised and refined, moving steadily away from the physical register and deeper into the psychological. The Stoic ideal of virtue reflects a clear instance of pleasure taken in a subtle form of cruelty: 'There is a cheerfulness peculiar to the Stoic … he feels hemmed in by the formalities he himself had prescribed for his conduct; he then enjoys the sensation of himself as dominator' (D 251). As opposed to a barbarous cruelty inflicted by a community on its members, this is cruelty directed against oneself, a pleasure in one's own self-denial, an enjoyment of one's own suffering. In the figure of the saint or ascetic, such psychological self-cruelty attains its apotheosis. With an 'unspeakable happiness at the *sight of torment*', the ascetic 'gazes out into the outer world only in order to gather as it were wood for his own pyre … one character burning and consuming himself' (D 113). Both Montaigne and Nietzsche associate these extreme drives towards virtue with forms of madness. Nietzsche observes that, in early Christianity, 'deliriums and convulsions' were sought out by 'desert solitaries' as proof of their saintliness (D 14). While Montaigne claims that the 'divisions separating madness from the spiritual alacrity of a soul … arising from supreme and extraordinary virtue' are 'imperceptible' (II.12; T471-2, S548 [363]). Unlike Nietzsche, however, Montaigne is unable to provide a convincing psychological account of how the dynamic of pleasure and pain is at work within such individuals. To explain the refined self-cruelty of the Stoic or saint, Nietzsche invokes the idea of self-dividing or self-splitting: 'Is it not clear that in all these instances man loves *something of himself* … more than *something else of himself*; that he thus *divides* his nature and sacrifices one part of it to the other?' (HAH 57) On this account, the ascetic may be understood as an individual 'split asunder', part tyrant, part slave.

Virtue, pleasure and voluptuousness

Although Nietzsche's psychological analysis of asceticism goes far beyond anything the *Essays* has to offer, Montaigne well recognized that, even—or especially—in the most

exalted virtue, self-cruelty is leavened by self-pleasure. To read the *Essays* is to be left in no doubt that our moral strivings have an essential basis in self-interest: inherent to virtue is a certain enjoyment, delight or gratification. Montaigne is fully aware that such a view goes against the grain of Greco-Roman moral thought and advances it with great satisfaction for that reason: 'Even in virtue our ultimate aim—no matter what they say—is pleasure. I enjoy bashing people's ears with that word which runs so strongly counter to their minds' (I.20; T80, S90 [56]). He assuredly does: his declarations on the association of virtue and pleasure become louder and more persistent as the *Essays* develop. The Stoic conceives morality in terms of a difficult and demanding duty, a constant, unrelenting struggle: the more obstacles that an individual has to overcome in order that his or her life may conform to rational law the greater the virtue. But Montaigne rejects this notion completely. For him, not only is the value of virtuous behaviour unrelated to the 'price she exacts' but, he argues, as much pleasure is to found in the pursuit of virtue as in its attainment (ibid. T80-1, S90-1 [56-7]). For, when Montaigne looks to the triumphant virtue of paragons like Cato and Socrates, what he finds is that their moral lives seemingly 'glide along with … easy natural progress' (I.26; T161, S182 [120]).

Montaigne's break with traditional understandings of virtue has him link 'virtue, pleasure and voluptuousness in a completely new way'.[37] Arguably, it is his characterization of Cato's suicide that represents the most innovative passage of the *Essays*, a passage whose psychological acuteness raises him above the moral outlook of the Stoics. In the act of taking his own life, following the victory of Caesar and the end of the Roman Republic, Cato, Montaigne is 'convinced', 'felt voluptuous pleasure in so noble a deed and … delighted in it more than anything else in his life' (II.11; T403, S475 [309]). What is striking here is not only the clear departure from Stoic doctrine but also the tension that inevitably arises when this statement is placed beside Montaigne's other comments on Stoicism—where he repeatedly stresses its uncompromising severity. In other words, what we have in Cato is the apparent paradox of an individual practicing the most savage self-cruelty (tearing out his own entrails to bring on death) experiencing the highest form of pleasure. Montaigne insists that Cato, in his final act, felt 'some unutterable joy … an access of pleasure beyond the usual order' (ibid.). Of course, as outlined, Nietzsche would resolve the quandary of Cato's psychology by

[37] Coleman, *Montaigne's Essais*, p. 46.

suggesting that one side of him, his love of Republican ideals, had achieved such ruthless sway over his soul that the ultimate sacrifice became for him an inevitable but delightful occasion. Hence, Nietzsche would share Montaigne's suspicion concerning whether Cato 'would have wished the opportunity for so fine an exploit to be taken from him' (ibid.). Nietzsche follows Montaigne in holding that 'it is at bottom a rare form of voluptuousness' that an individual such as Cato desires (HAH 142). And through the words of Novalis he claims: 'It is sufficiently marvellous that not long ago the association of voluptuousness … and cruelty called the attention of men to their inner relatedness and common tendency' (ibid.).

Nietzsche thus owes a clear debt to the *Essays* as regards the insight it provides into the psychology of extreme virtue, and the theme of the intimate relationship between cruelty and voluptuousness is one to which he returns frequently. In *Daybreak*, for example, he considers the possibility that 'Dante, Paul, Calvin and their like', as they pondered the Christian imaginings of sin and eternal damnation, may have come to appreciate 'the gruesome secrets' of the 'voluptuousness of power' (D 113).[38] However, an even more significant influence on Nietzsche may be Montaigne's recognition of a glaring contradiction at the heart of Stoic moral philosophy, again to do with the essential role that pleasure plays in moral motivation. The central question is this: if, as the Stoic would argue, virtue is a 'rugged and wearisome' duty, what becomes of the virtue of Socrates, who displayed 'some new joy and a playful rapture in his last words and ways' (II.11; T404, S476 [310]). That is, according to Stoicism's own moral

[38] This last word draws our attention to an obvious way in which Nietzsche, more and more as his philosophy develops, diverges from a strictly Montaignean analysis of the psychology of virtuous behaviour. In Book I of the *Essays*, Montaigne states: 'All the opinions in the world reach the same point, that pleasure is our target, even though they may get there by different means' (I.20; T80, S89 [56]). Many passages from *Human, All Too Human* are very much in line with this kind of thinking, for instance: 'the struggle for pleasure is the struggle for life. Whether the individual pursues this struggle in such a way that people call him *good*, or in such a way that they call him *evil*, is determined by the degree and quality of his intellect' (HAH 104). As we shall see, this attitude pretty well captures the essence of what Montaigne has to say about virtue in Book II of the *Essays*. However, from *Daybreak* onwards, Nietzsche comes to believe that the pleasure principle is a superficial and overly simplistic way of explaining what actuates moral behaviour. For Nietzsche, when scrutinized thoroughly, pleasure is actually a second-order (or even third-order) mental phenomenon: pleasure is not really operative at a motivational level, but is derivative of a more basic striving: a 'lust for power'. Pleasure, in fact, may be more appropriately understood as 'a feeling of power' and so is merely a consequence or accompaniment of deeper motives. Thus, in *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche offers a revision of the statement he had made in *Human, All Too Human*: 'Whether in benefiting or hurting others we make sacrifices does not affect the ultimate value of our actions … it is a sacrifice made for *our* desire for power or for the preservation of our feeling of power' (GS 13). Nevertheless, the fact that Nietzsche strides past Montaigne in terms of the insight he provides into the more subtle impulses underlying moral action should not blind us to the extent to which Montaigne cleared his path.

assumptions, Cato and Socrates, two individuals commonly accepted as representing the pinnacle of virtue, should have little to commend them—feelings of rapture and voluptuous pleasure are very far from the Stoic ideal. To put it succinctly, virtue ceases to be virtuous when the struggle of duty turns to easy pleasure. And as Nietzsche never tires of stressing, through long practice and habituation even the harshest demands may come to be accompanied by feelings of delight. David Schaefer thus proposes that what the *Essays* imply is that 'those who forsake physical pleasure or even life in the name of incorporeal goals are driven just as much by selfish pleasure and passion as professed hedonists', that there is 'no real *moral* difference' to be found between them.[39]

However, Montaigne is certainly not suggesting that the pleasure both Cato and Socrates derived from the thought of dying for their principles somehow tarnishes their moral stature. He remains in no doubt that both were exceedingly virtuous men. Following his description of Cato's death, Montaigne moves quickly to squash any notion that his words should be construed as an attempt to 'dim the splendour' of Cato's virtue (II.11; T404, S476 [309]). What he is suggesting, rather, is that there can be no basis for a moral distinction between Cato and the hedonist if—and this is the pivotal point—one accepts Stoic moral assumptions. Hence, Schaeffer's contention is only partly true: by rejecting the notion that virtue presupposes difficulty and opposition, one is free to develop an alternative conception of moral excellence where the line between Cato and the hedonist can be more clearly drawn. Similar to the way in which Nietzsche will later claim that, judged by the standard of selflessness, there are no moral actions, Montaigne is implying that there never has been truly virtuous behaviour without pleasure. Of course, Montaigne's critique of the idea of acting purely out of a sense of duty to the rational moral law applies with even greater force to more strongly deontological ethical systems. In *Daybreak*, Nietzsche thus deploys more or less the same argument against Kantianism as Montaigne does against Stoicism: 'When duty ceases to be a burden but, after long practice, becomes a joyful inclination … our inclinations … become … occasions of pleasant sensations. …We are now seeking *pleasure*' (D 339). Nietzsche therefore concludes that to 'demand that duty must *always* be something of a burden—as Kant does—means to demand that it should never become habit and custom: in this demand there is concealed a remnant of ascetic cruelty' (ibid.).

[39] Schaefer, "Montaigne's Political Skepticism", p. 533.

For Montaigne as well as Nietzsche, the notion that the highest moral actions are guided by wholly selfless motives represents a misunderstanding of human motivation. Both recognize that the virtuous and wicked alike draw pleasure from their behaviour. Moreover, they agree that the extremely moral individual feels pleasure of perhaps a more exquisite kind. Nietzsche proposes that there are two ways of denying morality. The first is exemplified La Rochefoucauld, who would deny that 'the moral motives which men *claim* to have inspired their actions really have done so—it is thus the assertion that morality consists of words and is among the coarser or more subtle deceptions' (D 103). As mentioned earlier, this is not Nietzsche's position nor, as is now clear, is it Montaigne's—although, to be sure, both would urge us to be suspicious of professed motives. In the case of Cato, Montaigne is at pains to stress that this moral exemplar is not deceiving us about what drives him to take his own life. Where La Rochefoucauld would doubtless see the ulterior motive of desire for posthumous fame, Montaigne does not: he 'was not pricked by any hope of glory … for such a consideration is too low to touch so generous a mind … he did it for the beauty of the thing itself' (II.11; T403, S475 [309]). Nietzsche and Montaigne, contra La Rochefoucauld, both eschew the tactic of reducing all moral behaviour to hypocrisy or insincerity; instead, what they deny is the validity of the traditional assumptions on which moral judgements are based. So, while it may be true that La Rochefoucauld is an important influence on Nietzsche's thinking in *Human, All Too Human*, the stamp of Montaigne's more nuanced and incisive psychological analysis is apparent in *Daybreak*. Nietzsche agrees with Montaigne that many so-called virtuous actions spring from admirable motives yet are based on 'errors': Cato is worthy of praise, but not for selflessness. Nietzsche sums up his position (and Montaigne's) thus: 'I do not deny … that many actions called immoral ought to be avoided … or that many called moral ought to be … encouraged—but I think the one should be encouraged and the other avoided *for other reasons than hitherto*' (D 103).

Montaigne, like Nietzsche, seeks a re-evaluation of the core presuppositions of traditional morality. He insists that pleasure, ordinarily understood as a foe of virtue and the mainspring of immorality, is, in fact, virtue's essential 'companion' (I.20; T80, S90 [56]). Based on his examination of the psychology of virtuous behaviour, Montaigne is firmly persuaded that Greco-Roman philosophy thoroughly misjudges not only the roots of morality but also the dynamics of moral motivation. As Regosin explains, against the main current of Greco-Roman thought Montaigne 'gives pleasure a moral dimension

and justifies its centrality'.[40] Similarly, Nietzsche contends that, by dint of a false interpretation of certain psychological states—deeming ourselves capable of so-called selfless actions—we have defamed 'egoistic' motives and deprived self-regarding actions of moral legitimacy. For Nietzsche, a major goal of the free spirit is thus to reveal 'the worm-holes of errors of every kind, so as to be able to reach many hidden souls on their secret paths' (D 449). Through experience and experiment and a more honest appraisal of the origins of our moral feelings, the free spirit will strive to eliminate all sources of bad conscience. In this way, the free spirit looks toward a distinctly Montaignean ideal: an individual devoid of presumption, cognisant of their natural limitations, aware of their capacity for cruelty (especially self-directed), and possessing a moral sensibility informed by a deep psychological understanding of their own behaviour.

[40] Regosin, The *Matter of My Book*, p. 241.

Section III: The Soul as Subjective Multiplicity

New understanding of the soul

Both Montaigne and Nietzsche reject any notion of being. Indeed, as he later admits, Nietzsche sees the strain of romantic pessimism evident in his first published work, *The Birth of Tragedy*, as indicative of decadence, of weakness, of a mistrust of becoming and a failure to fully accept that change and destruction are the central features of existence (EH 1.1-2). His subsequent break with Wagner's romanticism, and friendship, as well as his rejection of Schopenhauerian pessimism, precipitates a period of 'convalescence' that is documented in his middle works. These writings detail how, in order to develop an 'anti-romantic' therapy, Nietzsche engages in the demanding task of psychological self-observation (HAH II P2). An inspiration in this regard is Montaigne, who Nietzsche not only cites as an exemplar as he begins to distance himself from Schopenhauer and Wagner but whose *Essays* also provide a virtual blueprint in the art of self-study. What Montaigne finds when he begins to fashion his literary self-portrait is that the Heraclitean flux of the world, which he had sought to escape in the privacy of his estate, is reproduced in the self he endeavours to explore. In the course of the *Essays*, the portrait's sitter, far from coming into sharper focus, dissolves into a multiplicity of faces, features and aspects. This undermining of the traditional conception of the human self or soul is of profound importance for Nietzsche, who takes up Montaigne's repudiation of the idea of a unitary, unchanging self, in his middle and late works, and develops it in more radical directions.

The *Essays* commence with an attack on the traditional understanding of the soul as a fixed entity—even if indirectly. The opening essay, 'We reach the same end by discrepant means', examines the fickleness of human motivation and behaviour. Considering we now know that, in terms of chronological order, this was not Montaigne's first essay, but was specifically chosen by him to lead the more than one hundred essays of the collection, we may conclude that 'the idea of the inconstancy of man' was for him of paramount importance.[41] Montaigne drives this point home by having the opening essay of Book II tackle the same topic, with an essay entitled 'On the inconstancy of our actions'. These two essays set the tone for what follows, as Montaigne never tires of stressing the 'mutability', 'changeability' and 'diversity' of the

[41] Hartle, *Michel de Montaigne*, p. 93.

soul. He is determined to show that the Stoic ideal of constancy, based, as it is, on a conception of the soul as a kind of immortal Platonic essence, is an unattainable one. Thus, at every turn, the *Essays* alert the reader to be suspicious of any view that would represent the self as a permanent substance: 'anyone who turns his prime attention on to himself will hardly find himself in the same state twice' (II.1; T319, S377 [242]).

Montaigne, however, is not content to challenge the Platonic conception of the soul indirectly. Often, he goes much further and explicitly questions the coherence of the notion of a unified self: 'Given the natural inconstancy of our behaviour … it has often occurred to me that even sound authors are wrong in stubbornly trying to weave us into one invariable and solid fabric' (ibid. T315, S373 [239]). His most sustained and thoroughgoing rejection comes in the concluding paragraphs of 'An apology for Raymond Sebond', in which, borrowing heavily from Plutarch, he gives full expression to his philosophy of becoming: 'there is no permanent existence either in our being or in that of objects. … If you should determine to try and grasp what Man's being is, it would be exactly like trying to hold a fistful of water' (II.12; T586, S680 [455]). For Montaigne, we simply do not possess anything like a stable character, and what we take to be a secure personality is in fact a continuous succession of differing personalities. Consequently, he argues that the soul corresponds not to a single 'I', but to a multitude of 'I''s. When comparing the author of first edition of the *Essays* to a later edition, he concludes: '"I" now and "I" then are certainly twain' (III.9; T941, S1091 [736]). Therefore, what the *Essays* offer is a whole gallery of portraits, many of which bear only a passing resemblance to others. Some, Montaigne goes so far as to suggest, may even seem to present the visage of another person entirely: 'there is as much difference between us and ourselves as there is between us and other people' (II.1; T321, S380 [244]). In this way, the *Essays* conceive the soul not as a thing or substance that may be stabilized, grasped and then described, but rather as a 'continuous process of self-discovery and self-revelation'.[42]

Nietzsche absorbs what Montaigne's has to say about the nature of self and launches an even deeper critique of what he calls '*soul atomism*': 'the belief which regards the soul as something indestructible, eternal, indivisible, as a monad' (BGE 12). Many of the ways in which Montaigne attempts to shake this belief are also deployed by Nietzsche. For instance, he repeatedly draws attention to the instability and mobility of

[42] Sayce, *The Essays of Montaigne,* p. 149.

the self: 'all our doing and knowing is not a succession of facts and empty spaces but a continuous flux. … [I]dentical characters, identical facts … neither exists' (WS 11). In an unpublished note penned a few years later, he suggests that, instead of seeing the human being as an eternal 'subject', we would do better to understand ourselves in terms of 'living unities' that 'continually arise and die' (KSA 11: 40[21]). Hence, Nietzsche dismisses the notion of fixed personality, describing the 'doctrine of the unchangeability of character' as a 'prejudice' (D 560). As with Montaigne, this view leads him naturally to the claim that the soul is constituted of a plurality of 'I''s or persons, that the core of the human being is not '"an immortal soul", but many mortal souls' (AOM 17). Nietzsche holds that the self is forever changing, developing and, in the best case, growing and expanding: 'Something you formerly loved as a truth … now strikes you as an error. … But maybe that error was as necessary for you then, when you were still another person—you are always another person' (GS 307). In the same work, he goes on to outline the aim of his way of life and that of his fellow free spirits as follows: '*Wir … wollen Die werden, die wir sind*' (GS 335). This phrase has, more often than not, been translated as 'We want to become who we are', but it would be better rendered as 'We want to become *those* we are'.

Following Montaigne, Nietzsche maintains that one comes closest to capturing the essence of the soul only by portraying a continuous process of becoming. For Alan D. Schrift, Nietzsche undertakes to 'reformulate the notion of the subject' so that it is conceived 'not as a fixed and full substance or completed project, but always as a work in progress'.[43] Prior to the writing of *Beyond Good and Evil,* where he declares 'war, relentless war' against soul atomism, Nietzsche became aware of the work of Roger Boscovich, an 18th century Croatian philosopher and physicist (BGE 12). Boscovich rejects the idea of matter, preferring to explain hard bodies in terms of an energy field model. Nietzsche takes inspiration from what he sees as the defeat of atomism in physics and proposes that the way is open 'for new versions and refinements of the soul-hypothesis' in the realm of psychology also (ibid.). Free of the old soul 'superstition', the 'new psychologist' will be in a position to experiment with 'such conceptions as "mortal soul" and "soul as subjective multiplicity [*Seele als Subjekts-Vielheit*]" and "soul as social structure of the drives and effects"' (ibid.).[44] In an

[43] Schrift, "Rethinking the Subject", p. 58.
[44] Although we find the idea of 'psychical multiplicity' and the 'instability of the self … treated with limpid clarity by Montaigne', Nietzsche makes no explicit mention of the *Essays* in relation to his

unpublished note written a year later, he offers a conception that is a variant of the above, but still very much in the Boscovichian vein: 'No subject "atoms". The sphere of the subject constantly growing or decreasing, the center of the system constantly shifting' (KSA 12: 9[98]). Such a view brings to mind the Montaignean presentation of a soul that is 'flowing and rolling ceaselessly' (II.12; T586, S680 [455]). That the idea of the soul as a process of becoming, field of energy or system goes to the very core of Nietzsche's thought is clear from the subtitle of his philosophical autobiography, *Ecce Homo*, which reads 'How to Become What you Are'. As Schrift points out, it is very telling 'that Nietzsche says … "*what* one is (*was* man ist)" and not "*who* one is (*wer* man ist)"'.[45]

Complexity of the psyche

For Montaigne as well as for Nietzsche, the 'I' represents not a single, unified will, but a plurality of often conflicting wills. Montaigne proposes that we 'float along among many diverse counsels: our willing of anything is never free, final or constant' (II.1; T317, S375 [240]). In *Beyond Good and Evil*, soon after introducing his conception of the soul as a subjective multiplicity, Nietzsche claims that willing 'is a unit only as a word', a word that masks a 'manifold' phenomenon of 'commanding *and* … obeying parties'. From this perspective, willing is a matter of a strong voice, or group of voices, within the soul ruling over the weaker. And though unheeded, these defeated voices continue to whisper their demands. In this way, the soul may be understood as a 'commonwealth' composed of a dominating will at the head of a populace of 'under-wills' (BGE 19). To capture the diverse nature of the will, Montaigne also reaches for a political analogy. He argues against the notion of a unitary will by emphasizing its capacity for internal discord, and points to the frequency with which the will may be charged with 'sedition and rebellion'. He asks rhetorically: 'Does [the will] always want

---

'refinements' of the soul hypothesis (Parkes, *Composing the Soul*, pp. 320-1). However, the substantial influence of Montaigne on Nietzsche in the period in which these refinements were taking shape is undeniable. Brobjer observes that, while there 'is no single obvious major positive influence on Nietzsche in the period 1883-5', he 'seems to have read and re-read Emerson and Montaigne with much enthusiasm' (*Nietzsche's Philosophical Context*, p. 90). In fact, there are no less than 16 references to Montaigne in his unpublished notes during this time. And in a letter to his mother and sister in March 1885, he writes: 'there's no one living now whom I care much about; the people I really like are long dead e.g. Abbé Galiani or Henri Beyle or Montaigne' (KSB 7, 581) (Fuss and Shapiro, *Nietzsche: A Self-Portrait from His Letters*, p. 85).

[45] Schrift, "Rethinking the Subject", p. 59.

what we want it to?' (I.21; T101, S116 [73]) What particularly interests Montaigne is the way in which parts of the body seem to possess an unbending will of their own, at times refusing even to acknowledge orders from another source: 'Our hands often go where we do not tell them; our tongues can fail, our voices congeal, when *they* want to' (I.21; T100, S115 [72]). Graham Parkes therefore argues that the Montaignean understanding of the will in many ways anticipates the Nietzschean view that 'our body is but a social structure composed of many souls' (BGE 19).[46]

Nietzsche's conception of the soul as a subjective multiplicity amounts not merely to the claim that our character changes as we develop and that we are different people at various points in our lives, although this is part of what he has in mind. Rather, the truly innovative feature of his new soul hypothesis is the contention that the soul is populated by a multiplicity of persons at any given time—or at least, by 'the embryos' of many persons (KSA 13: 14[151] (WP 394)). For Nietzsche, multiple voices, representing different, and often contradictory, aspects of the self, continuously interact and contend within the soul, the soul embracing not only a plurality of wills but also a plurality of persons. His conception of subjective multiplicity thus entails understanding the psyche in terms of 'a polycentric field of persons'.[47] According to this view, the means by which one attains self-knowledge must be inherently dialogical, in the sense that one must be willing to accept, listen to and converse with the many residents of the soul: 'for the enrichment of knowledge it may be of more value not to reduce oneself to a uniformity. … Through thus ceasing to treat oneself as [an] … individuum … one takes an intelligent interest in the life and being of many others' (HAH 618). Furthermore, Nietzsche extends this notion of dialogue to include the internalized voices of exemplars.[48] We have already noted his reference to a group of past philosophers who speak to him when he wanders alone: 'upon these eight I fix my eyes and see theirs fixed upon me' (AOM 408). Unsurprisingly, this group includes Montaigne, whose own work offers unparalleled access to the voices to the ancients.

Of course, Montaigne also advocates on-going conversation with the great souls of former times: 'always imagine that you are with Cato, Phocion and Aristides … make them recorders of your inmost thoughts' (I.39; T242, S278 [183]). Montaigne's

[46] Parkes, *Composing the Soul*, p. 322.
[47] Ibid., p. 346.
[48] Ruth Abbey suggests that Nietzsche's middle works could well be considered 'dialogues with the dead', given the extent to which they present him as 'developing his thoughts through imagined exchanges with earlier thinkers' (*Nietzsche's Middle Period*, p. 147).

writing, therefore, like Nietzsche's, is fundamentally a prolonged and in-depth dialogue with the different voices of his own soul. In his final essay, he states that the entire aim of the project was 'but getting to know myself' (III.13; T1052, S1220 [823]). We can thus understand the *Essays* as an amazing feat of ventriloquism.[49] However faithfully he may seem to describe the characters of Alexander, Socrates, Cato and others, the many voices present are essentially expressions of the persons of Montaigne's psyche: he speaks through the ancients only in order to better understand and reveal himself. By way of the mouths of diverse speakers, Montaigne portrays the multiplicity of his own soul: 'I give my soul this face or that depending on which side I lay it down on. … Every sort of contradiction can be found in me' (II.1; T319, S377 [242]). In consequence, the *Essays* eschew harmony and consistency in favour of an endless variety and diversity in argument and perspective. Montaigne never fully resolves his main themes and ideas: 'There is nothing I can say about myself as a whole simply and completely, without intermingling and admixture' (ibid.). Hence, in the course of reading the *Essays* what we find is 'the formation of a criss-cross pattern of multiple oppositions and identities', an 'endless circularity of contradictions'.[50]

To see the soul in terms of many wills, under-wills and persons is to invest our mental lives with tremendous richness. Accordingly, the *Essays* show the human mind to be labyrinthine in its motivational pathways. For Montaigne, the sources of human behaviour are endlessly diverse, character is many-sided and temperament never simple. Although he leans heavily on Greco-Roman thought, the psychology represented in the *Essays* is far more complex than anything to be found in the philosophical works of antiquity. Montaigne signals his determination to complicate our psychological lives almost immediately in the *Essays*, with his discussion of Alexander the Great's harsh treatment of Betis, a warrior who displayed superhuman bravery when Alexander laid siege to the city of Gaza. Montaigne speculates as to Alexander's motives, offering a number of possibilities, each stated tentatively in the form of a question:

> Was it because bravery was so usual for him that he … respected it less? Or was it because he thought it to be so properly his own that he could not bear to see it at such a height in someone else without … envy; or did the natural violence of his anger allow of no opposition? (I.1; T14, S6 [5])

[49] Coleman, *Montaigne's Essais*, p. 19.
[50] Sayce, *The Essays of Montaigne*, p. 330.

Montaigne fails to reach a conclusion on Alexander's actions. However, by beginning his examination with 'Was it because', he seems to imply that any number of alternative explanations could plausibly be put forward, none of which would provide a complete account of the impulses that drove Alexander's behaviour. If one also considers that Montaigne introduces the episode with a description of Alexander as 'the staunchest of men and the most generous towards the vanquished', the subsequent sketch of Alexander's psychology becomes more torturous still (Ibid. T13, S5 [4]).

Montaigne not only strives to show the diversity of character traits possible within a single human soul: he also probes the intricacies of individual traits. In 'On the inconstancy of our actions', with Alexander again centre stage, Montaigne directs his attention to the question of valour. Although he concedes that there 'is no valour greater in its kind than Alexander's, he goes on to state: 'but it has its blemishes … we see him worried to distraction over the slightest suspicion he may have had that his men were plotting against him' (II.1; T320, S378 [243]). Thus, here as elsewhere, Montaigne forgoes a simplistic approach in favour of a more nuanced and penetrating analysis: valour, however apparently superhuman, is always limited, and shot through with the particular idiosyncrasies of the possessor.

In line with his conception of the self as a succession of altered personalities, Montaigne never stopped editing, revising and expanding the *Essays*. Later editions show subtle additions that refine his psychological insights and enrich his self-portrait, by allowing the more soft-spoken voices in his psyche the chance to be heard. Nonetheless, despite the numerous emendations he made to the *Essays* over the period of twenty years, Montaigne concludes his project by admitting that:

> I find it hard to link our actions one to another, but I also find it hard to give each one of them, separately, their proper designation from some dominant quality; they are so ambiguous with colours interpenetrating each other in various lights (III.13; T1054, S1222 [824-5]).

All this is to be found in Nietzsche. In *The Wanderer and His Shadow*, he associates himself with those moralists who 'seek to discover the complexity in the apparent simplicity' and direct their 'eye to the interlacing of motives' (WS 20). While he doesn't name any moralist directly, we may assume that, given their prominence in his writing at this time, he is referring to the moralists of the French tradition—La Bruyère,

Chamfort, Rochefoucauld—and particularly Montaigne, the originator of that tradition. What Nietzsche admires is a thinker who 'can circle around a thing ten times', but who in the end resumes 'their rigorous path' (D 530). This is something we see him do repeatedly in his middle and late works. Like Montaigne's essay style, Nietzsche's aphoristic style allows for a topic such as pity, selflessness or vanity to be discussed in various contexts and from a multitude of perspectives, thereby enabling him to uncover 'myriad motivations and driving forces'.[51] Little wonder, then, that we see him comment favourably on what he refers to as Montaigne's 'garrulousness': his 'delight in ever-new twists of the same thing' (GS 97). No doubt, the vastness of the psychological landscape mapped in Nietzsche's work greatly exceeds that of the *Essays*, but Nietzsche's writing is often distinctly Montaignean in the way that he relentlessly aims to reveal 'the several paths and motives' that 'can lead to the same action' (HAH 58). And he also follows Montaigne in his conviction that behind the illusion of unified traits and emotions hide a multiplicity of characteristics:

> [W]e never do anything … out of one motive … pleasure arises at the sight of a contrast to the condition we ourselves are in … at the thought of praise and recognition we will receive; at the activity of helping itself. … All of this, and other, much more subtle things in addition, constitute 'pity' (D 133).

The unconscious

The Nietzschean psyche envelops not only the different voices that speak for 'many mortal souls' and the voices of exemplars but also the ceaseless chattering of 'idea-persons': we traffic 'with *ideas* … as if they were individuals with whom one has to struggle, to whom one was to ally oneself, whom one has to tend, protect and nourish' (AOM 26). For Nietzsche, in our thinking, even the most abstract, we are simply incapable of apprehending 'a thing impersonally'; the thinker is forever 'person-constructing, person-inventing' (ibid.). Of course, there is no better exemplification of these kinds of psychological processes than the *Essays*, where we find arguments developed by way of an extraordinary range of interlocutors, a new voice (and a new

[51] Abbey, *Nietzsche's Middle Period*, p. 17.

face)—either through a direct quotation or an anecdote—introducing each new perspective. Nonetheless, Nietzsche offers a still more radical account of the psyche than the essayist, for while Montaigne dissolves the 'I' into a plurality of personalities, Nietzsche goes further and dissolves this plurality into innumerable instincts or 'drives'. With the publication of *Daybreak*, as Parkes explains, Nietzsche's conception of the psyche undergoes significant development: 'the discourse concerning psychological persons dips … into the realm of impulse and instinct. … [T]he second book of that text reveals a remarkable revisioning of the I in terms of drives'.[52] Hence, in a section entitled 'Experience and invention', we find Nietzsche claiming the following:

> However far a man may go in self-knowledge, nothing however can be more incomplete than his image of the totality of *drives* which constitute his being. He can scarcely name even the cruder ones: their ebb and flood … their play and counterplay among one another … remain wholly unknown to him (D 119).

What is most revolutionary here is the contention that our behaviour is determined by motive forces that remain below the level of conscious thought. In opening up the vast domain of the unconscious, Nietzsche thus achieves a remarkable deepening and expansion of the soul: on this view, the conscious aspects of the soul constitute only a tiny fraction of its range of activity. But here again we can see the influence of Montaigne, who fully recognized the extent to which non-conscious impulses prompt our thoughts and propel our actions: 'in the natures of men, there are hidden parts which are never revealed and which are sometimes unknown even to the one who has them' (III.2; T792, S917 [618]).

Dorothy Coleman suggests that Montaigne's essay 'On practice' offers perhaps the first discussion of the 'sub-conscious' in the history of Western thought.[53] Here, as mentioned previously, Montaigne describes in detail the reactions of his body and mind to a serious fall he suffered while out riding. Having lost full consciousness, he continues to speak a little and even replies to a few questions put to him, but as for these doings he insists: 'I played no part in them: they were empty acts of apparent thinking. … Any contribution from my soul … came only as in a dream' (II.6; T356, S422 [271]).

---

[52] Parkes, *Composing the Soul*, p. 289.
[53] Coleman, *Montaigne's Essais*, p. 122.

Some commentators refer briefly to the ways in which Freudian ideas are prefigured in the *Essays*.[54] Craig Brush acknowledges the originality of Montaigne's thought in this regard, but suggests that he failed to delve into the unconscious, favouring instead to depict the conscious processes of the mind.[55] However, this is to underplay the extent to which Montaigne understands conscious motivation as utterly superficial. He is at pains to stress that what seem to be the most important and consciously directed aspects of our mental lives—our reasoning and judgment—are in fact determined by unknown internal dynamic forces. Sayce thus emphasizes the 'boldness of Montaigne's psychological thought', the many respects in which it points toward 'psycho-analysis and modern psychiatry'.[56] Compare the following to the quote from Nietzsche above: 'A thousand chance emotions [*agitations indiscretes et casuelles*], unbidden, are in turmoil within me; sometimes a melancholic humour gets hold of me; at others, a choleric one; sometimes grief or joy dominate me, *for reasons of their own* [emphasis added]' (II.12; T549, S637 [425]). For both Montaigne and Nietzsche, the most decisive operations of the soul are opaque and essentially unknowable. To look at the *Essays* through the prism of a strictly Freudian conception of the unconscious may very well reveal Montaigne as having little awareness as to its power and significance. However, if instead one reads the *Essays* with an eye toward Nietzsche, who not only probed the unconscious mind but was also himself profoundly influenced by Montaigne, we gain a truer picture of the depth of Montaigne's understanding.

Nietzsche's intensive study of Montaigne clearly stimulated his own exploration of the unconscious, as his examination of drives and instincts often bears an unmistakable Montaignean cast: by having the discussion centre around remarks to do with the random movements of the mind and the concealed roots of our actions, Nietzsche's treatment evokes countless passages from the *Essays*. Montaigne constantly stresses the 'chance' nature of our conscious thinking, the fact that we are not free to think as we please, but are carried along by thoughts whose origins elude us: 'I cannot remain fixed within my disposition and endowments. Chance plays a greater part in all this than I do' (I.10; T41, S39 [26]). In *Daybreak*, Nietzsche describes how, before performing any action, 'there step into our reflective consciousness one after another the

[54] Frame, *Montaigne*, p. 320; Sayce, *The Essays of Montaigne*, pp. 138-9.
[55] Brush, *From the Perspective of the Self*, p. 187.
[56] Sayce, The *Essays of Montaigne*, pp. 138-9. George Hoffmann describes how Montaigne 'displaces conscious intent in favour of more elusive motives, sometimes barely understood by their subjects' ("The investigation of nature", p. 168).

consequences of various acts' (D 129). We then determine the best way to proceed based on an analysis of these various consequences. However, by doing so, we are '*accustomed* to *exclude*' all the 'unconscious processes' that so arranged this picture of consequences in the first place (ibid.). Hence, he proposes that the actual conflict of motives that prompts us to behave one way or another is 'invisible to us', and whenever we act: 'caprice and waywardness come into play, some motion or other happens quite by chance to leap forth: in short, there come into play motives … unknown to us … which we can never take account of *beforehand*' (ibid.).[57] Montaigne, in 'On the art of conversation', digressing, as usual, from the main theme, engages in a discussion of the role that 'Fortune' plays in the workings of the mind:

> I will go on to say that our very wisdom and mature reflections are for the most part led by chance [*hasard*]. My will and my reasoning are stirred this way and that. And many of their movements govern themselves without me. My reason is daily subject to incitements and agitations which are due to chance (III.8; T912-3, S1058 [713]).

As a result, for both thinkers, a person only ever possesses a partial understanding of their behaviour, and the causes of even the most trivial actions are more complex than would first appear. Nietzsche thus mocks those who still hold to the 'primeval delusion … that one knows, and knows quite precisely … *how human action is brought about*. … [E]veryone else too is in no doubt that he understands what is essentially involved in the process of action of every other person' (D 116). And Montaigne ridicules those philosophers who aim to comprehend the workings of the heavens while being completely unaware of the non-conscious forces that guide their every move: 'No philosopher understands his neighbour's actions nor even his own. … These people … have … never, among all their books, plumbed the difficulties which confront them in understanding their own being' (II.12; T520, S604-5 [402]).

Montaigne is insightful also about the soul's capacity for unconscious repression, the way we actively keep hidden from consciousness certain emotions and desires that would cause us too much pain to face directly. An especially illuminating

[57] In the next aphorism, Nietzsche states: 'We have accustomed ourselves to believe in the existence of two realms, the realm of *purposes* and *will* and the realm of chance [*Reich der Zufälle*]. ... This belief in the two realms is a primeval romance and fable' (D 130).

passage from ‘On some lines of Virgil’ draws together a number of observations on this topic and is worth quoting in full:

> Why does nobody profess his faults? Because even now he remains within them. … [A]s the soul’s ills grow in strength they are wrapped in greater obscurity: the more ill a man is, the less he realizes it. That is why the maladies of the soul need to be often probed in daylight, cut and torn from our hollow breasts by a pitiless hand (III.5; T823, S953-4 [642]).

The many ideas that come together here anticipate more detailed examinations in Nietzsche work. Nietzsche follows Montaigne in understanding the phenomenon of repression primarily in terms of a self-deception that functions as a highly sophisticated self-defence mechanism. Self-deception is possible, he argues, because we rarely achieve the sufficient distance to view ourselves clearly, we are always standing ‘a few paces too close’ to see anything other than a minor detail or ‘insignificant trait’ (AOM 387). Thus concealed, we fall prey to endless self-deception: in order to ensure that a flattering self-image perpetually ‘shines upon us’, we often attribute ‘false motives’ to ourselves and ‘deliberately banish’ disturbing parts of our past from our minds (HAH 68; AOM 37). Given the extent—and success—of the soul’s protective measures, Nietzsche imagines the self as a ‘fortress’ defended against itself, accessible only by indirect attack via ‘a secret path’. And the pitiless hands that conduct such an attack are those of ‘friends and enemies’ who ‘play the traitor’ (HAH 491). In *Beyond Good and Evil*, he proposes that the ‘basic will of the spirit’ is composed of many conflicting drives, one of which involves ‘a refusal to let things approach, a kind of state of defence against much that is knowable, a satisfaction with the dark’ (BGE 230). For as Montaigne explains, ‘[t]ruth has its difficulties, its awkwarknesses and its incompatibilities with us’ (III.10; T983, S1137 [769]).

Moral agency

Nietzsche’s most devastating attack on soul atomism comes in the form of an outright rejection of the traditional understanding of agency. He argues that there is neither a thinker behind thought nor an actor behind action, dismissing the idea of an ‘I’ who performs a causal role as a metaphysical superstition. Rather than directing our

behaviour, any 'I', as a feature of consciousness, would itself merely be the *consequence* of the interaction of unconscious drives. As a result, in Nietzsche's view, the innumerable persons of the psyche function not as the most primary causal factors but are expressive of more fundamental impulses that are the real determinants of behaviour. In this way, his 'new version' of the soul hypothesis constitutes a complete abandonment of the main features of the old, involving a move away from the idea of a soul monad harbouring a single agent toward a conception that understands the soul as 'a field of forces devoid of agency'.[58] He further suggests that 'it is only through the seduction of language (and through the fundamental errors of reason petrified in it)'—for instance, the belief in stable unities—that we are led to posit the existence of an 'I' who thinks, wills and acts: 'But no such substratum exists; there is no "being" behind doing, acting, becoming; "the doer" is merely a fiction imposed on the doing—the doing itself is everything' (GM 1.13). He therefore concludes that we turn reality on its head when we believe a subject or 'I' to be the cause of thinking (BGE 54). For Nietzsche, it is a given of our phenomenological experience that we do not will the vast majority of our thoughts into existence, they simply emerge into consciousness: 'a thought comes when "it" wishes', and not when "I" wish, so that it is a falsification of the facts to say that the subject "I" is the condition of the predicate "think"' (BGE 17).

Unlike Nietzsche, Montaigne never explicitly gives up on the idea of agency, despite the fact that his understanding of the soul coincides in its essentials with the picture just described. He, too, repudiates the notion of a 'substratum' underlying our thoughts: 'Reason is baffled when it looks for … substantial existence' (II.12; T586, S680 [455]). Moreover, the view that thoughts happen, but are not caused, represents one of his deepest convictions. At times, he does seem to want to refuse responsibility for his actions and intimates doubt concerning his own agency: 'My activities would tell you more about Fortune than about me. They bear witness to their own rule not to mine' (II.6; T359, S426 [274]). However, he is reluctant to probe the clearly subversive implications of his understanding of the soul. For, if we can be as different from ourselves as from other people, if non-conscious forces guide our thoughts and actions, if we don't understand the motives for which we act, and if our reason and judgement are under the dictates of chance, what is to become of moral accountability? Montaigne never explicitly recognizes a problem in this regard.

[58] Parkes, *Composing the Soul*, p. 380.

By contrast, Nietzsche follows the course of his argument through to its disquieting yet inevitable conclusion: we cannot be held morally responsible for our actions. The traditional conception of moral responsibility assumes that actions have their origin in conscious intent and thus are clearly understood by the moral agent. However, once this assumption is shown to be nothing more than a 'primeval delusion', the edifice of moral responsibility crumbles and we are forced to confront the reality that: 'our moral judgements and evaluations too are only images and fantasies based on a … process unknown to us' (D 119). For Nietzsche, judgements of praise and blame are rendered incoherent, if the realm of human behaviour is one of misunderstood actions based on unknown motives. Accordingly, in *Beyond and Evil*, he announces the coming of a new period in the history of moral thought, what he calls the '*extra-moral*'. This era will involve a 'reversal and fundamental shift in values', an 'overcoming' of traditional morality, such that 'the decisive value of an action' will be understood to lie 'precisely in what is *unintentional* in it', and the former 'morality of intentions' will be looked back on as 'a prejudice, precipitate and perhaps provisional' (BGE 32).

We have every reason to believe that Montaigne, despite his unwillingness to say so openly, was fully cognizant of the dire implications the *Essays* pose for the traditional understanding of agency. Lampert argues persuasively for a reading of Montaigne that sees him following in the footsteps of Plato as a practitioner of the noble lie: he 'writes obliquely and does not draw the conclusions of his thoughts, leaving it to the resourcefulness of the reader to discover the richer and bolder matter'.[59] Lampert points to Montaigne's acceptance of the fact that philosophers are often forced to don a mask in order to conceal unwholesome truths from segments of their audience. In 'An apology for Raymond Sebond', he admits the suspicion that philosophers such as Epicurus, Plato and Pythagoras never actually believed many of the doctrines they endorsed. He suggests, rather, that '[p]art of what they wrote was simply designed to meet the social need of the general public' (II.12; T492, S571-2 [379-80]). Montaigne goes on to highlight the danger of promulgating ideas that help to 'disturb people's obedience to the law' and concludes that many of the schools of philosophy are concerned not with truth but with 'moral usefulness' (ibid.). Given the intrinsic role that the traditional conception of moral responsibility plays in the functioning of society at large—perhaps the acceptance or rejection of no other idea has greater ramifications and

[59] Lampert, *Nietzsche and Modern Times,* p. 221.

thus must be approached with extreme sensitivity—Montaigne refrains from exposing his reservations directly, preferring a noble lie of omission to the acknowledgment of an explosive truth. Indeed, Nietzsche proposes that hitherto the 'only kind of proof … deemed necessary for demonstrating the truth of' our accountability as moral agents has been the fear that 'it would be *terrible* … crazy and unthinkable' if the opposite were the case (D 116). He, however, rejects the argument from moral usefulness and the '*pia fraus*' of the 'improvers' of humanity (TI 7.5). And so Nietzsche brings into the light what Montaigne attempts to veil in darkness. Yet Nietzsche praises Montaigne as the most honest of philosophers for good reason:

> If you look into these memoirs of mine you will find that I have said everything or intimated everything. What I have been unable to express in words I point towards with my finger. Those slight traces [quoting Lucretius] are enough for a keen-scented mind and will safely lead you to discover the rest (III.9; T961, S1111-12 [751]).

CHAPTER 3: HUMAN AND NATURE

Section I: The Naturalization of Humanity

Homo natura

> To translate man back into nature; to become master over the many vain and overly enthusiastic interpretations and connotations that have so far been scrawled and painted over that eternal basic text of *homo natura*. ... [T]hat may be a strange and insane task, but it is a task—who would deny that? (BGE 230)

Following the *Untimely Meditations*, Nietzsche's determination to naturalize humanity becomes ever more pronounced. Deploying subtle psychological and historical analyses, he strives to develop wholly naturalistic accounts of metaphysics, religion, and morality, undermining their supposedly transcendent origins. For Nietzsche, our religious and metaphysical impulses are nourished by psychological 'errors', and our most deeply felt moral intuitions, despite their apparently categorical validity, are historically contingent and socially conditioned. His rejection of the traditional understanding of the soul in *Beyond Good and Evil* represents a central move in this naturalizing programme, for it is only when soul atomism is defeated and the soul is reconceived as mortal, unstable, as a play a drives, instincts, or affects that the 'basic text of *homo natura*' can begin to be deciphered. Thus, in *On the Genealogy of Morals*, his next work, he engages in a genealogical investigation of the soul, a study of how primitive humanity has been shaped by the civilising forces of community and culture.

Despite Nietzsche's frequent claim that his philosophy takes up the task of naturalizing humanity, it is only in the past two decades or so that scholars have begun to consider seriously the idea of Nietzsche as naturalist.[1] One of the most influential works to emerge from this recent trend is Brian Leiter's *Nietzsche on Morality*. Leiter

[1] The quote above from *Beyond Good and Evil* echoes a passage written four years earlier in *The Gay Science*: 'When will all these shadows of god no longer darken us? When will we have completely de-deified nature? When may we begin to *naturalize* humanity with a pure, newly discovered, newly redeemed nature?' (GS 109)

argues that Nietzsche may be best understood as 'methodological naturalist', insofar as he believes that philosophical investigation should be 'continuous with the sciences either in virtue of their dependence upon the actual results of scientific method in different domains or in virtue of their employment and emulation of distinctively scientific ways of looking at and explaining things'.[2] However, as many commentators have noted, such a reading seems to offer little promise of capturing the full import of Nietzsche's philosophy, indeed even seems at odds with it, bearing in mind his many statements on the limitations, the 'crudity and naivety', of an entirely causal-deterministic study of reality (GS 373). In *The Gay Science*, he writes that the scientific interpretation of the world may yet prove to be 'the *stupidest* of all possible interpretations', since 'an essentially mechanistic world would be an essentially *meaningless* world' (ibid.). What insight, Nietzsche asks, could scientific formulas possibly provide regarding the '*value*' of a piece of music—the obvious implication being that science is mute on all questions of value (ibid.). Maudemarie Clark and David Dudrick thus propose that what Leiter's account ignores is 'the distinction between the physical order … and the normative order', that Nietzsche sees the human being as existing not only in a 'space of causes' but also, and more importantly, in a 'space of 'reasons'.[3] Largely agreeing with this analysis, Richard Schacht suggests that Nietzsche's naturalism could perhaps be characterized as 'scientian', by which he means a kind of naturalism that is 'scientifically informed and sophisticated', but which finds causal-deterministic thinking problematic in many ways and certainly not 'paradigmatic methodologically' or 'all-encompassing in its scope'.[4]

For Schacht, Nietzsche's kind of naturalism is thus 'more expansive … both substantively … and methodologically' than Leiter credits.[5] Substantively speaking,

---

[2] Leiter, *Nietzsche on Morality*, p. 5.

[3] Clark and Dudrick, "The Naturalisms of Beyond Good and Evil", p. 160. Clarke and Dudrick argue that, on the Nietzschean view, 'claims to knowledge … cannot be understood from an empirical perspective', because the judgements of any agent presuppose the existence of a 'network' of 'value commitments' (p. 163).

[4] Schacht, "Nietzsche's Naturalism", p. 187. Schacht claims that Leiter is mistaken when he represents Nietzsche as a '*scientistic* naturalist', that is, as a naturalist who considers the natural-scientific mode of enquiry to be above all others and 'decisive in its authority' (ibid.).

[5] Schacht, "Nietzsche's Naturalism", p. 197. In terms of methodology, Schacht proposes that Nietzsche's naturalism engages a multiplicity of perspectives, only some of which are based on natural-scientific modes of explanation. In *Human, All Too Human*, Nietzsche describes his new approach to philosophy as '*historical philosophizing*' (HAH 2). Central to this method of philosophizing, Schacht suggests, are 'developmental explanations' that focus on social and cultural transformations and seek to comprehend 'the qualitative respects in which human reality has become something significantly different from a merely biological affair' (p. 200). For Nietzsche,

Nietzsche's naturalism commits him to the view that neither our religious feelings, nor our moral intuitions, nor our metaphysical speculations put us in touch with a reality beyond the ordinary, empirical, everyday world. Schacht proposes that Christopher Janaway has it right, when he represents Nietzsche's naturalism as follows:

> [Nietzsche] opposes transcendent metaphysics. … He rejects notions of the immaterial soul, the absolutely free controlling will, or the self-transparent pure intellect, instead emphasizing the body, talking of the animal nature of human beings, and attempting to explain numerous phenomena by invoking drives, instincts, and affects which he locates in our physical, bodily existence.[6]

For our purposes, what is most conspicuous here is the degree to which the foregoing reads like a summary of the main themes of the *Essays*. A close look at Nietzsche's naturalism thus serves to show the very real sense in which he fulfils his desire to make himself 'at home in this world' with Montaigne in his middle and late works. Montaigne's examination of the 'base and earthbound' motives that lie behind metaphysical speculation, his subversive claim that morality has no other basis than custom, his repudiation of the Platonic conception of the soul, and his focus on the importance of the body all prefigure central motifs in the naturalism of Nietzsche's mature philosophy. Moreover, the 'insane task' that Nietzsche sets himself, of translating humanity back into nature, is essentially continuous with Montaigne's mission to deflate vanity and 'presumption' and situate the human being back within the natural world. Whereas Montaigne laments that humanity has 'adulterated' nature with 'many arguments and extraneous reasonings', Nietzsche seeks to overcome the 'overly enthusiastic interpretations' that have been painted over *homo natura* (III.12; T1026, S1188 [803]). Furthermore, the claim that human nature is something that has been obscured and corrupted, and hence must be uncovered and purified, is voiced time and again in the *Essays*. For instance, in 'On the Cannibals', Montaigne writes that we 'have so overloaded the richness and beauty of [Nature's] products by our own ingenuity that we have smothered her entirely' (I.31; T203, S232 [152]). A few essays later, again

---

such transformations are not amenable to causal-deterministic analysis, but may be probed to uncover the various constituent elements and types of influence.

[6] Janaway, *Beyond Selflessness*, p. 34.

expressing his concern over humanity's unhealthy separation from nature, he suggests: 'like those who drown the light of day with artificial light, we have drowned our natural means with borrowed ones' (I.36; T222, S254 [167]). Therefore, in many ways, Nietzsche's mature philosophy represents the carrying forward, post-Darwin, and with the benefit of two hundred years of scientific advance, of a project of re-translation initiated by Montaigne.

Montaigne also presents himself as a naturalist. In 'On physiognomy', defending himself against the charge that his self-portrait amounts to nothing more than a collection of 'borrowings' from others, he writes: 'Followers of Nature like me realize that, in honour, invention takes incomparably higher precedence over quotation' (III.12; T1034, S1197 [809]). Within the context of 16th French century intellectual life, by characterising himself in this manner, Montaigne seeks to convey that his philosophy represents 'the attempt to explain phenomena without recourse to divine causation, or "first causes"'.[7] Indeed, his contempt for the supernatural and the superstitious couldn't be more apparent. Heaping scorn on alchemy, astrology and chiromancy, Montaigne describes prognostication as a form of 'deception', and as symptomatic of 'delusion' (I.32; T213-5, S242-4 [159-61]). He also dismisses the notion that there is anything unearthly about the alleged occurrence of miracles, preferring to explain the claims of believers by invoking mundane, all-too human considerations: 'It is likely that the credit given to miracles … and such extraordinary events chiefly derives from the power of the imagination acting mainly on the more impressionable souls' (I.21; T97, S111-12 [70]). Added to this focus on natural causes, Montaigne, particularly his late essays, accepts the importance and prerogative of first-hand, direct experience and experiment, of knowledge derived from the senses. Hence, although he is writing at a time before the main intellectual advances of the scientific revolution, carried forward by Descartes and Bacon, Montaigne's preference for causal reasoning over the teleological explanations of Medieval Scholasticism, as well as his enthusiastic empiricism, leads us to detect in his philosophy 'the expression of a genuinely scientific frame of mind'.[8]

Even so, Montaigne's stance toward the causal-deterministic mode of enquiry is far from uncritical. While considering himself a naturalist, he also proudly admits: 'I am not much of a "natural philosopher". … I have hardly any idea of the mechanisms by which fear operates in us' (I.18; T74, S81 [52]). Montaigne, no less than Nietzsche,

[7] Hoffman, "The investigation of nature", p. 163.
[8] Sayce, *The Essays of Montaigne*, p. 184.

harbours great reservations about the wholesale applicability of causal reasoning to human affairs. In 'On the lame', he comes close to the Nietzschean view that a purely natural-scientific account of our experiences fails to address the most important question, that of the value of those experiences, what they mean to us. For Montaigne, those who search for causes 'ignore the *whats* and expatiate on the *whys*', and thereby leave behind that which is truly of concern, the distinctively human significance of our experiences (III.11; T1003, S1161 [785]). Stressing the barren nature of such thinking, he states: 'Wine is no more delightful to the man who knows its primary qualities'—a remark not too dissimilar to that of Nietzsche's on music (ibid.). Such comments have led some scholars to argue that's Montaigne's understanding of 'experience' has 'nothing in common with the experiments of the natural sciences'.[9] Hoffmann points to a passage in 'On experience' where Montaigne appears to deny the benefits of a scientific mode of reasoning: 'The induction which we wish to draw from the likenesses between events is unsure since they all show unlikenesses. When collating objects no quality is so universal as diversity' (III.13; T1041, S1207 [815]).[10]

Like Nietzsche, Montaigne sees no escape from the 'errors' of reason and the simplifications of language. We do not discover laws in nature but merely project our limited human perspective onto the world. Yet, even if empiricism offers no metaphysical knowledge, no access to the true 'essence' of things, for Montaigne a form of positive knowledge is still available: 'every example limps and any correspondence which we draw from experience is always feeble and imperfect; *we can nevertheless find some corner or other by which to link our comparisons* [emphasis added]' (ibid. T1047, S1213 [819]). As Sayce observes, there is here some advance beyond scepticism', and a gesture toward the idea of scientific progress; it is within our power to develop hypotheses and offer plausible interpretations of the world.[11] Indeed, Montaigne has earlier made plain 'the possibility of infinite advance in the arts and sciences':[12] '[quoting Agrippa] The assays of experience have taught me that … what is known to one century is clarified by the next … the arts and sciences are not just cast in a mould all at once, but have to be gradually shaped by repeated handling and polishing' (II.12; T543, S631 [421]). Therefore, what becomes clear is that much in the *Essays* presages Nietzsche's distinctive brand of naturalism, and that Montaigne, a true

[9] Friedrich, *Montaigne*, p. 140.
[10] Hoffmann, "The investigation of nature", p. 160.
[11] Sayce, *The Essays of Montaigne*, p. 179.
[12] Schaefer, *The Political Philosophy of Montaigne*, p. 115.

predecessor of his thought, could perhaps be described as a proto-scientian naturalist. Montaigne rejects scientific thinking only to the extent that it claims to provide anything other than a partial perspective on the world. On this issue as in most others, his comments reflect a desire to deflate human presumption, the belief that we can ever attain absolute knowledge. And though it would be an exaggeration to say that Nietzsche's criticisms of science take their cue from Montaigne, considering that the *Essays* display only a tentative understanding of the possibilities for scientific progress, it would certainly be legitimate to claim that Nietzsche found considerable support for such criticisms in the *Essays*. We can thus see that both Montaigne and Nietzsche, even if framing their own philosophies naturalistically, seek to undermine confidence in a certain kind of naturalism, one for which everything that is worth knowing about human life can be captured in terms of mechanistic general laws and causal-deterministic reasoning.

The substantive, as opposed to the methodological, dimension of Montaigne's naturalism is most obviously revealed by his eagerness to construe human existence as just another form of animal life. In order to rediscover our natural means and free ourselves from corruption, Montaigne recommends that we look to the freedom and simplicity of the animals, who exhibit a form of life untainted by vanity and artifice. He argues that a study of animal behaviour has much to teach us because, 'beneath the countenance of Nature', animals and humans are 'one and the same' (II.12; T436, S513 [336]). This radical claim goes to the core of Montaigne's thoroughgoing naturalism. In complete opposition to both the Greco-Roman and Christian traditions, which agree in seeing humanity as a distinct and higher form of existence, Montaigne continually subverts the notion of a stark separation between human beings and the rest of nature. As regards our relationship to the animals, he insists that we 'are neither above nor below them', but on the same level, and 'subject to the same restraints' (ibid. T437, S514 [336]). Hence, Montaigne is committed to the view that humanity possesses 'no true privilege or pre-eminence' (ibid.). More revolutionary still, he proposes not only that human and animal are of the same 'genus' but also human and vegetation:

> I am led to abase our presumption … and … lay aside that imaginary kingship over other creatures which is attributed to us. … [T]here is a kind of respect and a duty in man as a genus which link us not merely to the beasts … but even to trees and plants (II.11; T414, S487-8 [317-8]).

Montaigne thus advances an understanding of human existence that sees us as inescapably part of the natural world, one animal among others, and related to all living things.

At the time of his writing the *Untimely Meditations*, Nietzsche seems reluctant to embrace such a determinedly naturalistic position, despite his acceptance of the central claim of the Darwinian thesis, that of universal common descent through an evolutionary process. In 'On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life', he articulates this unease by describing the 'doctrine' of the 'fluidity of all … types and species … the lack of any cardinal distinction between man and animal' as 'true but deadly', deadly because, if generally accepted, such a doctrine could serve as an impediment to any strivings toward a higher culture (HL 9). Montaigne is free from any such anxiety. On the contrary, he proclaims openly—and sometimes gleefully—what Nietzsche finds deadly, exhausting all his powers of ingenuity in detailing the close affinities between animals and humans (II.12; T429-465, S505-41 [330-58]). In fact, Montaigne's stated aim is to bring humanity 'into conformity with the majority of creatures' (ibid. T436, S513 [336]). But even in 'Schopenhauer as Educator', where Nietzsche singles Montaigne out for exceptional praise, he continues to resist the idea that humanity as a whole should be understood in comparable terms to other creatures, maintaining that exceptional human beings have the potential to transcend animality and confer a metaphysical importance to existence: 'They are those true *men, those who are no longer animal, the philosophers, artists and saints*; nature … has made its one leap in creating them … nature then feels for the first time it has reached its goal' (SE 5).

Human, All Too Human, however, testifies to a marked change in Nietzsche's stance and appears very much under the sway of Montaignean thinking. No longer wary of the deadly truth, he is keen to dismiss any suggestion that humanity can somehow leave behind its animal past. In the first section, 'Of First and Last Things', sounding a distinctly Montaignean note, he ridicules the 'pride' through which humanity has 'raised [itself] above the animals' and firmly rejects the idea that our 'tender' feelings in any way elevates us above them (HAH 11, 29). Later in the same work, he bemoans the power and influence of a Christian church that has placed the animals 'too far below man' (HAH 101). Leiter suggests that, as regards this transformation in Nietzsche's outlook, 'the crucial moment … was his discovery in 1866 of Friedrich Lange's … *History of Materialism*, a book which opened up for him the whole history of

philosophical materialism'.[13] No doubt, the German materialist movement of the 1850's, and Lange's writing in particular, was extremely significant for the development of Nietzsche's thought. However, a legitimate objection to this line of argument would be that it seems difficult to understand how Nietzsche's study of Lange could be considered decisive for the naturalism that is central to *Human, All Too Human*, since the earliest part of this work was published in 1878. The question is this: if it was Nietzsche's discovery of *History of Materialism* that was crucial in turning him toward naturalism, why did it take more than a decade for its influence to surface in his philosophy?

The evolution in Nietzsche thought that is manifest in *Human, All Too Human* stems from his rejection of the metaphysics and values of romantic pessimism. Montaigne is pivotal in this regard, providing a counter ideal to Schopenhauerian pessimism, highlighting the fundamental importance of the art of psychological dissection and what it uncovers about our most strongly felt moral and metaphysical intuitions. What is more, we are now in a position to recognize that Montaigne's influence on Nietzsche's mature philosophy is every bit as profound, in the sense that he points Nietzsche in the direction of the philosophical naturalism that orients his thinking from *Human, All Too Human* onward. Montaigne's willingness not only to confront but celebrate humanity's continuity with the rest of nature inspires Nietzsche to overcome his fear of a reality made undeniable by Darwin. Berry is thus right to argue that Nietzsche's intensive reading of the *Essays* during the 1870's made a 'significant contribution' to *Human, All Too Human* by 'giving impetus to the naturalism' he begins to develop there.[14] But this is a very distinctive kind of naturalism, a scientian naturalism.

For Leiter, Nietzsche's embrace of a methodological naturalism is responsible for the admiring attitude toward science discernible in his middle works. However, even in *Human, All Too Human*, often seen as his most positivistic work, Nietzsche's attitude to the scientific worldview is ambivalent, his recognition of its limitations explicit: 'a higher culture must give to man a double-brain, as it were two brain-ventricles, one for the perceptions of science, the other for those of non-science … this is a demand of

[13] Leiter, "Nietzsche's Naturalism Reconsidered", p. 579.
[14] Berry, "The Pyrrhonian Revival in Montaigne and Nietzsche", p. 498. Berry follows Leiter in seeing Nietzsche as a methodological naturalist, and proposes that Pyrrhonism, as a form of 'naturalistic skepticism', 'solves the problem of how a certain sort of skeptic could be described without inconsistency as a methodological naturalist' (*Nietzsche and the Ancient Skeptical Tradition*, p. 95).

health' (HAH 251). Throughout his writing, Nietzsche's position on the methods of science remains consistent: he accepts their power and usefulness, but rejects their applicability to all spheres of human life. This is certainly not to deny that the tone with which he speaks of these methods alters dramatically, from one of contempt to one of qualified respect. But this change of tone has less to do with a revolution in Nietzsche's thinking on the methods of science than with his growing acceptance of a robust substantive naturalism. In *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche denounces the scientific drive to knowledge for destroying the basis of mythopoetic illusions and the 'metaphysical solace' they provide. By the time of his writing *Human, All Too Human*, as a consequence of his repudiation of the 'metaphysical need' and any notion of transcendence—whether through music or religion or metaphysics—such an argument has lost all force for Nietzsche. This is the decisive change in his outlook. Nietzsche's eventual abandonment of the notion that the artist, philosopher or saint represents a form of existence beyond the animal enables him to speak more sympathetically of the natural-scientific framework. To fully comprehend the Nietzsche of *Human, All Too Human*, it is thus necessary to realize that his main difficulty with this framework, in earlier works, has little to do with methodology per se; his concern, rather, is with what the findings of science signify for the status of humanity, and the possibility of a higher culture. Nietzsche, however, comes to accept the deadly truth and to affirm a naturalism that reflects his concerns about the 'crudity and naivety' of scientific thinking.

Such a reading is better placed to make sense of the way Nietzsche's philosophy progresses after the *Untimely Meditations*. In setting Montaigne up as an exemplar, he begins to appreciate that the future of his thought, beyond Schopenhauerian pessimism, lies in a cheerful naturalism. Consequently, as Nietzsche's thought develops in his middle works, he finds that he must distance himself from remarks in 'Schopenhauer as Educator'. In *The Wanderer and His Shadow*, he urges us to 'always … bear in mind the fundamental principle that nature never makes a leap' (WS 198).[15] Indeed, he comes to deride his earlier view, when he depicts humanity as 'the comedian of the world', owing to the hubris of believing itself to be 'the goal and purpose of … the whole universe' (WS 14). This is almost a paraphrase of Montaigne's mocking criticism of humanity's presumption in 'An apology for Raymond Sebond': 'Is it possible to

[15] Nietzsche reaffirms this position in *Daybreak*: 'However high mankind may have evolved … it cannot pass over into a higher order, as little as the ant and the earwig can at the end of its "earthly course" rise up to kinship with God. … Away with such sentimentalities!' (D 49)

imagine anything more laughable that that this pitiful, wretched creature should call [itself] Master and Emperor of a universe' (II.12; T427, S502 [329]). Moreover, the task of translating humanity back into nature, which Nietzsche comes to see as fundamental to his philosophy, demands that we stand 'before the *rest* of nature … deaf to the siren songs of old metaphysical bird catchers who have been piping all too long, "you are more, you are higher, you are of a different origin"' (BGE 230).

Attempting to undermine our 'faith' in morality, in *Daybreak* Nietzsche not only appropriates the *Essays'* examination of morality as custom but he also borrows a typical Montaignean strategy. Montaigne's preferred mode of attack on human presumption is to demonstrate that so-called higher human faculties, commonly cited in support of the argument for humanity's uniqueness, are also enjoyed by forms of animal life. Particularly in 'An apology for Raymond Sebond', he catalogues the many ways in which animals display significant powers of reasoning, imagination and communication. Having offered numerous examples of the 'natural intelligence' of various animals, Montaigne asks: 'What aspects of our human competence cannot be found in the activities of animals?' (II.12; T432, S508 [332]) Nietzsche adopts this approach, but takes it in a direction not pursued by Montaigne, into the domain of morality. He proposes that there are 'easily discoverable parallels' between behavior in the 'animal world' and the 'social morality' demanded by human society, going on to suggest that:

> The beginnings of justice, as of prudence, moderation, bravery … are *animal*: a consequence of the drive which teaches us to seek food and elude enemies. Now if we consider that even the highest human being has only become more elevated … in the nature of his food and in his conception of what is inimical to him, it is not improper to describe the entire phenomenon as animal (D 26).

Like Montaigne, in using this line of argument Nietzsche intends to explode the pretensions of traditional philosophy, as well as to naturalize the way in which we think about such issues, and more specifically in this case, to overcome 'the many vain and overly enthusiastic interpretations' that have sought to construct a metaphysical basis for deep-seated moral intuitions.

Sickness in humanity

To the extent that we have abandoned our natural means and conceived ourselves above and apart from nature, Montaigne diagnoses an illness in humanity. He points to the way in which animals live comfortably in accordance with natural law and in harmony with their environment, yet humans seem endlessly at war within themselves, fearful of their most basic instincts, ashamed of their bodies. Montaigne thus proposes that animals are our superiors in important respects, having much to teach us as regards 'the most necessary aspects' of our lives (III.12; T1026, S1188 [803]). And he suggests that, given the numerous respects in which the highest human 'wisdom must learn from the very beasts', it is obvious that 'humanity is sick and … our reason leaves behind no manifest trace in nature' (ibid.). Hence the urgency and necessity of defeating human presumption, as only when this sickness is acknowledged can a treatment be found. Nietzsche, construing the problems that face humanity in remarkably similar terms, places the question of humanity's 'health' at the forefront of his mature works. In the *Genealogy*, echoing Montaigne, he states that human beings are 'the most chronically and deeply sick of all the sick animals' (GM 3.13). This is a claim he reiterates in *The Anti-Christ*, where, having alerted the reader to beware of the 'vanity' of believing that we are 'the crown of creation' and having made clear that all creatures stand beside humanity 'at the same level of perfection', Nietzsche describes human beings as the 'sickliest' animal (A 14).

For both Montaigne and Nietzsche, humanity's ill health is due to a complex of causes, the symptoms observable on a variety of levels: instinctual, physiological, axiological, and cultural. Most crucially, humanity is sick because we have, as Montaigne phrases it, 'unslaved ourselves [*nous nous sommes émancipez*] from Nature's law' (I.14; T58, S61 [39]). Whereas other creatures are guided by the certainty of instinct, human beings are burdened by the confusion and unreliability of reason, with the result that human action is seldom free and easy, but more often hesitant and forced, tainted by doubt. We have 'lost' our connection to 'natural laws', Montaigne explains, and 'that fine human reason is always interfering … distorting and confounding the face of everything' (II.12; T564-5, S655 [438]). Comparatively, then, humanity experiences suffering in a way that animals do not, suffering that, rooted in estrangement from the natural world, may be understood as a kind of sickness. Therefore, Nietzsche argues that when we say that human and animal exist on the 'same level of perfection', 'we assert too much', for human beings are 'comparatively speaking … the biggest failures … the

… animals who have strayed the most dangerously far from their instincts' (A 14). Both thinkers seem to be of one mind that this instinctual sickness is the inevitable outcome of the development of sophisticated forms of social organization. Montaigne implies as much when he states: 'Bear-cubs and puppies manifest their natural inclinations but humans immediately acquire habits, laws and opinions; they easily change or adopt disguises' (I.26; T148, S167 [109]). Advancing well beyond the *Essays*, Nietzsche, in the *Genealogy*, provides a compelling account of the process whereby the human soul separated from its animal past and began to suffer from 'bad conscience'.

Nietzsche proposes that the human being was compelled to quit nature's law 'under the pressure of that most fundamental of all changes—when he found himself definitively locked in the spell of society and peace' (GM 2.16). For any such society to be possible, the 'human animal' had to be bred out of forgetfulness, since only a being with a well-developed memory, capable of making and keeping promises, is in a position to recognize the claims of responsibility. Through acts of violence and immense cruelty, the earliest societies enforced rigid adherence to moralities of custom, shaping the human animal into a social human being (GM 2.1-2). From then on, all the pre-social animal instincts were 'devalued and "suspended"'. Montaigne suggests that in humanity natural laws are obscured by the untrustworthy workings of reason. Nietzsche concurs to an extent, but understands the issue more broadly, as a problem to do with the development of consciousness: 'they were reduced, these unfortunate creatures, to thinking, drawing conclusions, calculating, combining causes and effects, to their "consciousness", their most meagre and unreliable organ!' (GM 2.16) Also, while Montaigne acknowledges the centrality of cruelty in our psychological lives and is well aware of the important role that custom plays in the formation of conscience, he fails to explicitly link these ideas to the question of humanity's sickness and separation from nature. Nietzsche, on the other hand, offers a detailed analysis of the origins of self-cruelty and humanity's betrayal of its own instincts:

> Every instinct which does not vent itself externally *turns inwards*—this is what I call the *internalization* [*Verinnerlichung*] of man: it is at this point that what is later called the "soul" first develops. … Those fearful bulwarks by means of which the state organization protected itself against the old instincts of freedom … caused all the instincts of the wild, free,

> nomadic man to turn backwards *against himself*. … [*S*]*uch* is the origin of "bad conscience" (ibid.).[16]

With his account of internalization, Nietzsche reveals the intimate relationship between custom, cruelty and conscience, completing a picture only sketched in the *Essays*.

That instincts may no longer discharge themselves outwardly, however, is not the proximate cause of what he terms 'active' bad conscience. For Nietzsche, internalization is to be considered the 'origin' of bad conscience merely in so far as it created the essential conditions in which such a 'weed' could take root, but the growth of bad conscience was not by any means a necessary feature of internalization. Active bad conscience arises only when internalization is accompanied by another form of 'sickness', more pernicious and menacing than the first, an axiological sickness, where the basic, animal instincts are not just 'suspended' but also despised and denigrated. The central thesis of the *Genealogy* is that for 'thousands of years, a fearful struggle has raged on earth between the two opposed value-judgments, "good and bad" and "good and evil"', master morality and slave morality, and that 'the second value-judgment has long been in the ascendant' (GM 1.16). On the Nietzschean view, it is primarily to the victory and rule of slave morality that we owe the existence of the phenomenon of bad conscience.

Based on his genealogical analysis of the conditions underlying the development of morality, Nietzsche proposes that designations of 'good' can be traced back to the more fundamental concept of 'refined' or 'noble', that is, to the value judgements of aristocratic societies (GM 1.4). Noble individuals know nothing of the self-torture of bad conscience. Trusting in their instincts, they live freely and spontaneously, their morality one of self-affirmation. Indeed, Nietzsche claims that lurking beneath the surface of 'the noble races' are clear signs of 'the energy', the 'core needs', of 'the animal' (GM 1.11). The *Genealogy* details the historical process whereby the healthy value system of aristocratic societies has been overturned by '*the slave revolt*' of 'priestly castes' (GM 1.7). Finding its beginning in Judaism and its culmination in

[16] At the same time, it should also be observed that, even if Nietzsche goes on to describe bad conscience as 'the greatest and most sinister sickness', his overall assessment of this phenomenon is not entirely negative: 'On the other hand, let us immediately add that with the emergence of an animal soul turned against itself … , something so new, so deep … so enigmatic *and pregnant with the future* came into existence that the earth's aspect was essentially altered' (GM 2.16). In other words, for Nietzsche, bad conscience has paved the way for all higher human development (see discussion Chapter 3, Section II).

Christianity, this is a revolt of the weak and oppressed against the strong and successful. Powerless to inflict physical harm on the noble individual, and thus motivated by a 'sickly' *ressentiment*, the slave instead, through a 'radical transvaluation of values', achieves a spiritual victory, reinterpreting everything low and impotent as 'good' and everything 'strong, free, high-spirited' as 'evil', thereby slandering the aristocratic mode of evaluation, infecting spontaneity and freedom with the virus of guilt (GM 1.7-11). For this reason, Nietzsche condemns the slave revolt in morals as a reversal that has led eventually to 'the sickly softening and moralising by means of which the animal "man" finally learns to feel ashamed of all his instincts' (GM 2.7).

Together with his ideas on internalization, Nietzsche's examination of *ressentiment* is one of the central innovations of his mature thought, revealing how thwarted revenge may 'become creative and ordain values' (GM 1.10). Donnellan suggests that, with his genealogical analysis of morality, Nietzsche sees himself as having greatly surpassed the psychological insights of the French moralists.[17] Nonetheless, Montaigne is acutely aware of the axiological sickness that Nietzsche seeks both to expose and explain. Throughout the *Essays*, Montaigne urges us to confront the issue of our unhealthy and disastrous drive to self-punishment: 'What a monstrosity of an animal, who strikes terror in himself, whose pleasures are a burden to him and who thinks himself a curse. … We show our ingenuity only by ill-treating ourselves' (III.5; T857, S994 [670]). This passage captures the essence of what Nietzsche understands by active bad conscience: 'This secret self-violation … to brand oneself with … a contradiction, a contempt, a No, this sinister labour' (GM 2.18). Furthermore, Montaigne, like Nietzsche, abhors the extent to which our basic inclinations, thoroughly maligned, have been 'chased away', such that we strive to escape from natural freedom into a prison of our own making (III.9; T950, S1101 [743]).

For Montaigne, we carry such madness of self-torture to the most extreme intensity when we promote values and prescribe duties that we cannot—indeed, should not—live up to. Sentencing ourselves to be 'necessarily at fault', we aspire 'to the standards of a different type of being', inevitable failure supplying an endless source of shame (ibid. T969, S1121 [758]). Montaigne points to the perversity of holding ourselves in contempt for not doing what is simply impossible for us to do. More

[17] Donnellan. *Nietzsche and the French Moralists,* p. 167.

perverse still, he adds, is that the 'very laws which condemn us to be unable blame us for being so' (ibid.). In the *Essays*, Montaigne avoids discussion of Christian doctrine, and never criticizes religious dogma explicitly. But here we may discern a tacit critique of Judaeo-Christian values, the Christian understanding of sin in particular, according to which human beings are held culpable for 'original sin', as well all the sins that inexorably flow from inherent wickedness. Nietzsche views the notion of sin as the culmination of slave values and the most sinister form of bad conscience: 'psychic cruelty which simply knows no equal: the *will* of man to find himself guilty and reprehensible to a point beyond the possibility of atonement' (GM 2.22). In fact, he interprets the concept 'God' as 'the ultimate opposing principle, representing everything that humanity cannot hope to be, against which we are made certain of our absolute unworthiness' (ibid.). What both Montaigne and Nietzsche seek vehemently to destroy is the notion that humanity is intrinsically irredeemable, that we should be ashamed of what we are, of the natural drives and inclinations which are essential to our lives.

Primitivism

Montaigne's discussion of the 'primitives' of the new world reveals most tellingly his rejection of the core values—Judaeo-Christian as well as Greco-Roman—that underlie the European culture of his day.[18] Thoroughly admiring, his account of the customs, practices and values of these peoples paints a picture that contrasts starkly, and most unfavourably, with the artificiality and corruption of his contemporaries. Montaigne views the so-called 'savages' as paragons of health, envying their 'true, vigorous' living, their 'most natural and most useful properties and virtues' (I.31; T204, S232 [153]). The antithesis of the affectation and pretension characteristic of Europeans, at one with their 'natural means', they remain 'close neighbours to the original state of nature' (ibid.). Such primitive societies, not by any means 'barbarous', cultivate desires that are natural and necessary, disciplined by moderation. In consequence, the inhabitants of the New World, Montaigne implies, know nothing of the axiological sickness that grips their European conquerors, nothing of the self-cruelty of shame, guilt and sin, the bad conscience that poisons basic human instincts. On the contrary, they

[18] In 'On the Cannibals', 'the coupling of the cannibal and humanism is intended to bring to light the normative presuppositions and ideological underpinnings of Renaissance thought in general' (Zalloua, *Montaigne and the Ethics of Skepticism*, p. 112).

establish sensible laws and impose modest duties on themselves, appropriate to their capacities and natural endowment. And far from seeing their lives as a 'curse', the savages celebrate and affirm their simple but rather noble existence (ibid. p. T209, S237 [156]).

In the *Genealogy*, Nietzsche writes with similar reverence of the primitive Goths and Vandals, from whom, he claims, the noble races of Europe are descended. Like Montaigne, it is the vitality and forceful spirit of these 'barbarians' that he praises. Both thinkers associate a love of war and conquest, and extraordinary bravery, with the barbarian way of life. Montaigne describes the savages as astonishingly 'steadfast' in battle and ready for bloodshed, as warriors who 'do not even know the meaning of fear and flight' (ibid. T207, S235 [155]). Nietzsche offers a comparable but more vivid portrait: 'their indifference and contempt for safety, life and limb, comfort, their horrific serenity and deep pleasure in all destruction, in the sensuality of victory and cruelty' (GM 1.11). For him, the 'tame', civilised modern European, dominated by slave values, stands in pale and unfortunate contrast to the vigour of the 'predator' human, the 'magnificent blond beast' (ibid.). Nietzsche thus argues that in quite fundamental ways civilised humanity could be said to constitute a 'regression' in the species, not an advance. More disquieting still, he suggests that the 'disgusting sight' of a 'failed', sick humanity may even serve as 'an argument against "culture" as a whole' (ibid.). This is precisely the lesson that Montaigne draws from his study of the peoples of the New World. He finds degeneracy not in the savages but rather in the dissimulation and corruption of supremely civilised French culture, proposing that it is more appropriate to designate as 'savage' that which has been 'artificially perverted' (I.31; T203, S231 [152]). On the question of who are the real savages, the primitives or the Europeans, Montaigne seems to reach no firm conclusion, but the implication is clear: 'for either they must be or we must be: there is an amazing gulf between their souls and ours' (ibid. T211, S239 [158]).

Section II: The Re-Naturalization of Values

Axiological sickness

It is evident from Montaigne's account of the inhabitants of the New World that, notwithstanding his remarks on the many ways in which the animals surpass us, he certainly does not think that humanity suffers from some kind of constitutional sickness, forever doomed to an unfulfilled way of life. Nor does he discount the possibility of a uniquely human dignity, naturalistically grounded and appropriate to the beings that we are. For Montaigne, the return of humanity to an animal-like existence, guided by brute instinct, is neither possible nor desirable. As he emphasizes, the primitives are to be admired precisely because of the nobility of their customs and social practices, moral and religious as well as martial. Consequently, Montaigne finds such peoples exemplary not insofar as they lack all manner of civilization, but rather to the extent that they remain untouched by the kinds of corruption and dissimulation characteristic of his European contemporaries. Hence, as regards his denunciation of human presumption, Montaigne restricts his attack to certain forms of civilization and particular uses of rationality; and if he describes our alienation from natural instinct as a sickness, he also recognises the enormous opportunities that our higher cognitive capacities provide. Human reason, though limited, offers the chance to move beyond the basic liberty of inclination enjoyed by the animals, to a more substantial freedom: '[I]t has pleased God to bestow some slight capacity for discursive reasoning on us so that we should not be slavishly subject to the laws of Nature as the beasts are but should conform to them by our free-will and judgement' (II.8; T366, S434 [279]).

Montaigne's verdict on the human predicament is thus more positive than the diagnosis of sickness would suggest. Indeed, at the very same time as he stresses human vanity and weakness, he also urges us to realize that '[w]e are richer than we think, each of us' (III.12; T1015, S1175 [794]). A marked feature of the *Essays* is the way in which Montaigne's comments on human nature, often critical and contemptuous in Books I and II, become ever more approving in Book III, so much so, in fact, that the culminating essays of the volume reveal a total embrace of the human condition. As Frame notes, over time, Montaigne's use of the word 'human' changes considerably, progressing from a term of mild insult to 'an expression of his highest praise'.[19] In this

[19] Frame, *Montaigne,* p. 221.

regard, however, two points are worth noting. Firstly, we do well to recognize that Montaigne's apparent misanthropy, especially evident in his early writing, has less to do with a genuine scorn for humanity than with a strategic pose adopted to further his aim of deflating human presumption. Consequently, in Book III of the *Essays*, with that aim achieved, Montaigne shifts focus and begins to concentrate on human strength rather than weakness, thereby allowing his admiration for humanity, his love of life, to come to the fore. Secondly, even in the midst of his most savage criticism of human folly, Montaigne's monumental engagement with the historical never dims: he continues to insist that individual greatness is possible. Montaigne takes pride in the fact that, for all its absurdity, humanity, owing to its 'slight capacity for discursive reason', can still boast the emergence of an Alexander, a Cato and a Socrates from among its ranks.
If anything, Nietzsche is even more convinced than Montaigne of the enormous potential for human greatness, while being no less certain of human sickness. For both thinkers, the processes that led to human socialization and civilization represent an opportunity as well as a danger. Nietzsche follows Montaigne not only in seeing our separation from natural instinct as regrettable in many respects but also in understanding that separation as a situation out of which a new, more profound kind of health may develop. In the *Genealogy*, having described internalization and the phenomenon of bad conscience as 'the greatest and most sinister sickness', he goes on to write:

> On the other hand, let us immediately add that with the emergence of an animal soul turned against itself …, something so new, so deep, so unprecedented, so enigmatic *and pregnant with the future* came into existence that the earth's aspect was essentially altered (GM 2.16).

Essentially altered in the sense that, through the internalization of instinct, the 'whole inner world' became 'extended and expanded', acquired depth and breadth (ibid.). What later became known as the human 'soul' began to evolve, creating new possibilities for existence. In addition, this deeper, broader soul boasted unique powers of cognition, since an animal capable of making promises had to possess, besides memory, advanced reasoning capacities, the ability to reflect and draw conclusions, or to use Nietzsche's phrasing, the human animal had to become '*calculable, regular, necessary*' (GM 2.1).

Hence, he states that humanity, despite the sickness of bad conscience, arouses 'hope' and represents 'a great promise' (GM 2.16).

Undoubtedly, then, in the *Genealogy*, as in the *Essays*, the ascription of sickness to humanity belies a more sanguine assessment. Such a reading is confirmed by a restatement of Nietzsche's position in *The Anti-Christ*. Here, after making the case that humans are 'the sickliest animals', he again immediately qualifies his remarks, adding: 'but of course and in spite of everything the most *interesting* animal as well!' (AC 14) In this way, Nietzsche's comments on humanity's sickness, like Montaigne's, may be understood as partly rhetorical, designed to ridicule the vain idea, central to both Greco-Roman and Christian thought, that human beings are the goal of creation, possessing unparalleled advantages over other creatures. But such comments are no *mere* provocation, as Nietzsche insists that what humanity has gained through internalization and the development of higher cognition has not come without great loss. Echoing Montaigne's envious comments on the ease and freedom of the animals, he laments that 'a vast quantity of freedom' has been 'expelled from the world, or at least removed from visibility and, as it were, forcibly made *latent*' (GM 2.17). However, as is obvious from his hope in the great promise of humanity, Nietzsche deems the cost of bad conscience a price worth paying, because at the end of the internalization process, as its culmination and final outcome, there stands what he calls the 'sovereign individual', a being who enjoys 'a special consciousness of freedom and power' and the true liberation of self-mastery (GM 2.2). Without bad conscience and the sickness of self-cruelty no such individual would be possible, nor, for that matter, would the free spirit or the overhuman, or any kind of human nobility. For Nietzsche, bad conscience is the precondition for all higher human development: 'Bad conscience is an illness, there is no doubt, but an illness in the same way that pregnancy is an illness' (GM 2.19).

Therefore, both Nietzsche and Montaigne, though they write often of the mistake of raising humanity too high above the animals, attach great significance to the distinctive character and special potential of humanity. In fact, both stress the immense value of an individual in whom this potential has been realized. For Montaigne, the sage who is 'lord of himself' and 'entirely self-sufficient' is to be reckoned 'above kingdoms and dukedoms' (I.42; T252, S290 [190]). Nietzsche goes even further: 'I teach … that a single individual can under certain circumstances justify the existence of whole millennia' (KSA 11: 27[16] (WP 997)). In consequence, as regards the task of translating humanity back into nature, the core issue for both thinkers is not our divorce

from the instinctual life of the animal, but rather the ways in which we squander the possibility of human greatness through the perverse values and ideals that have come to direct human life. What most concerns Montaigne and Nietzsche is the diagnosis, treatment and cure of an axiological sickness, the removal of humanity's self-hatred and shame. Accordingly, in 'On the Cannibals', Montaigne leaves no doubt that his praise of the primitives, while indirectly a critique of his contemporary culture, is fundamentally an attack on the values of Platonism, which inform so much of Greco-Roman thought. And Nietzsche, in the preface to the *Genealogy*, asserts that a value sickness at the heart of European culture represents 'the danger of dangers', and furthermore, that this sickness would be to blame 'if the *highest power and splendour* of the human type … were never to be reached' (GM P6).

Ascetic ideals

With his Heraclitean worldview, his rejection of pure rationality, metaphysical speculation and the unity of the soul, his immersion in the sensations and pleasures of the physical world, his understanding of humanity as closer to the animal than to the divine, Montaigne offers a philosophy that is fundamentally opposed to the outlook of Platonic idealism. No clearer indication of this antagonism can be found than in his discussion of the *Republic* in 'On the Cannibals'. Montaigne feigns regret that Plato had no knowledge of primitive cultures such as those of the New World, and then goes on to ridicule Plato's accounts of the earliest human societies, which he describes as 'ingenious fictions' (I.31; T204, S232 [153]). What is more, he claims that the natural, vigorous existence of the 'savages', so free from 'artifice', displaying 'no acquaintance with writing, no knowledge of numbers', greatly surpasses anything Plato could ever have imagined (ibid. T204, S233 [153]). Montaigne's criticism of the *Republic*, however, goes much deeper than simply highlighting its naive anthropological speculations. More importantly, he argues that what is known of the peoples of the Americas must lead us to question 'the very conceptions and yearnings of philosophy' (ibid.). Montaigne forces us to consider the stark contrast between what he later calls 'humours soaring to transcendency [*humeurs transcendantes*]' and the raw, physical, unadorned existence of the primitives (III.13; T1096, S1268 [856]). He implies that, when looked at beside the *Republic*, the unashamedly earthly orientation of these peoples throws the absurdities of Platonic metaphysics into the sharpest possible relief.

For Montaigne, there is a great deal more wisdom to be discerned in lives lived according to our natural condition than in the Platonic ideal of a disembodied existence, disengaged from the sensual and the earthly, solely devoted to intellectual contemplation.

Montaigne evinces nothing but contempt for any view that would see the journey to truth and goodness as passing through self-denial and detachment from the material world. Although he often offers Socrates as a philosophical exemplar, chiefly in Book III of the *Essays*, Montaigne ultimately rejects the Socratic understanding of the philosophical life, expressed most famously in the *Phaedo*: 'the soul of the philosopher most disdains the body, flees from it and seeks to be by itself' (65d). Whereas Socrates would have us purify the soul from any taint of the body, Montaigne recommends that we 'go to the very boundaries of pleasure' (I.39; T240, S276 [181]). The *Essays* represent nothing less than an anti-ascetic manifesto. As Quint puts it, Montaigne 'refuses categorically … to suppress any passion'.[20] Also, whether discussing Greco-Roman or Christian practices, he strives to show asceticism in an absurd light. Montaigne repeatedly ridicules Stoic techniques of self-cultivation, whereby the individual anticipates misfortune and, for a period of time, in order to become accustomed to hardship, voluntarily lives a life or extreme discomfort—an approach he mockingly describes as akin to donning 'your fur coat on Midsummer's Day, because you will need it at Christmas' (III.12; T1027, S1189 [803]). Equally opposed to ascetic strains of thought within the Christian tradition, he advises the reader to stay clear of 'contemplative and non-material' exercises of worship (III.8; T909, S1054 [710]). Hence, as the *Essays* develop, Montaigne seeks to overturn the values of asceticism, to repudiate the notion that the highest human ideal is that which takes us away from the body and the earthly. Anything but exemplary, asceticism represents the vain and unnatural desire to transcend the human, the most sinister form of presumption: 'A man can be as wise as he likes: he is still a man. … Wisdom cannot force our natural properties' (II.2; T328, S388 [249]).

Determined to place humanity back within the natural world, Montaigne's anti-idealism and anti-asceticism are central elements in his naturalizing project, and go hand in hand with his denunciation of our perverse capacity for guilt and bad conscience. He aims to replace unnatural, impossible ideals—which necessarily cannot

[20] Quint, "Letting Oneself Go", p. 126.

be followed and thus become engines of self-loathing—with naturalistic ideals that, free of any notion of transcendence, honour earthly life. Nietzsche follows Montaigne in rejecting the kind of otherworldly ideals that have come to dominate the Western philosophical and religious traditions. In *Ecce Homo*, he states that, if we are to move onto 'the correct path', we must recognize that, hitherto, humanity has been 'in the *worst* hands', guided by 'slanderers of the world and desecrators of humanity' (EH, 'D' 2). Furthermore, Montaigne and Nietzsche not only diagnose the same axiological sickness but they also agree on its primary cause: Platonism in all its various forms and guises. Nietzsche consistently frames his thought as directly opposed to philosophies that take us away from the real, the actual, and the present. In *The Gay Science*, he insists that the 'philosophers of the future' must be 'sensualists', not idealists (GS 372). *Beyond Good and Evil* opens with the claim that the fate of European culture will be determined by the outcome of a centuries long 'fight against Plato' (BGE P). But the most succinct expression of Nietzsche's anti-Platonism comes in the *Genealogy*: 'Plato versus Homer: that is the complete, the real, antagonism—on the one side, the sincerest "man of the beyond", the philosopher who most defames life; on the other, the poet who involuntarily deifies it' (GM 3.25).

If Nietzsche judges Homer the poet who most deifies life, he considers Montaigne the most exemplary this-worldly philosopher—as his remarks in 'Schopenhauer as Educator' make plain. An exception among the great thinkers of the past, Montaigne finds his true 'home' in the bodily existence of earthly life. He rejects the 'melancholy' conclusion about life reached by Socrates and the 'wisest men in every age': that '*it's no good*' (TI 2.1). On the contrary, Montaigne assigns ultimate value to earthly existence. Commenting on the practice of condemning so-called 'witches' to death based on dubious testimony, he states: 'To kill people, there must be sharp and brilliant clarity; this life of ours is too real, too fundamental, to be used to guarantee these supernatural and imagined events' (III.11; T1009, S1167 [789]). Both Nietzsche and Montaigne deplore the extent to which humanity has come to question the fundamental nature of earthly life, to devalue the reality of human life as a merely apparent existence, inventing ascetic ideals through which we believe the transcendence of human limitations is possible, and the attainment of a higher truth beyond illusion. The prevalence of such ideals in humanity's history prompts the following outburst from Montaigne:

> [Y]ou can find many men who, to rise above their fellows, never allow themselves to be seen eating a meal … ; they slash and disfigure their faces and limbs and never talk to anyone—fanatics all—folks who believe they are honouring their nature by defacing it; … who seek to make themselves better by making themselves worse. … [T]hey shun health and happiness as harmful and inimical qualities. … There are not merely several sects but whole peoples for whom birth is a curse, death a blessing (III.5; T857, S994 [670]).

And here is Nietzsche in the *Genealogy* summing up what ascetic ideals express: 'this hatred of the human, and even more of the animal, of the material, this revulsion from the senses … this fear of happiness and beauty, this yearning to pass beyond all appearance, change, becoming' (GM 3.28).

While Montaigne remains content to denounce the unnatural ideals that humanity has set on high, Nietzsche goes further and probes the 'meaning' of such ideals. On the Nietzschean account, the supremacy of ascetic ideals has everything to do with the victory of Christian slave values. After all, slave values promote shame and the self-torture of bad conscience, and decry all that is powerful, healthy, and successful. Such values find their culmination in the self-denial and the fear of pleasure and happiness that are constitutive of ascetic ideals. Ascetic ideals, in other words, are the natural outgrowth of slave values. And as regards the predominance of such values, Platonism is again the crucial factor. Through the early Church Fathers, Augustine in particular, Christianity appropriated much of Plato's idealist philosophy. Therefore, in *Twilight of the Idols*, Nietzsche states that in 'the great disaster of Christianity, Plato represents that ambiguity … that made it possible for the nobler natures of antiquity to misunderstand themselves and step out onto the *bridge* that leads to the "cross"' (TI 10.2). Indeed, in *Beyond good and Evil* he suggests that Christianity may be best understood as a plebeian form of idealist philosophy, as a 'Platonism for the "the people"' (BGE P). At any rate, in terms of the relationship between slave values and ascetic ideals, what 'ultimately explains the triumph of slave morality is the same thing that explains the triumph of the ascetic ideal—the ability to give meaning to suffering'.[21] For the slave, impotence and weakness are good because they guarantee

[21] Leiter, *Nietzsche on Morality*, p. 268.

reward in a heavenly beyond; for the ascetic, self-denial and renunciation of earthly life are good because they pave the way to the highest truth. But as Nietzsche stresses, the meaning that ascetic ideals offer humanity amounts to little more than a pyrrhic victory over suffering, since such ideals explain suffering through the creation of even greater suffering. Ascetic ideals save humanity from meaninglessness only by 'bringing all suffering under the perspective of *guilt*' and, through a grave mistrust of the instincts, ensuring a 'rebellion against the most fundamental pre-conditions of life' (GM 3.28).[22]

Denaturalized values

For Nietzsche, the success of this rebellion has led to the denigration of the central features of earthly life, a complete denaturalization of values. Everything human has been deemed worthy of contempt, shameful: the senses as corrupt, the body as repulsive, sexuality as wicked. Our highest ideals, with their focus on the otherworldly, on the overcoming of the human in favour of the divine, force us to despair of the real and the actual, to condemn the earth according to unnatural standards: 'If one detaches an ideal from reality one debases the real, one impoverishes it, one slanders it' (KSA 12: 10[194] (WP 298)). Locating worth solely in the transcendent, and so a testament to human vanity, ascetic ideals take us away from the immanent beauty of life, draining the world of value. They cause us to mistake ourselves, to imagine humanity as apart from nature, obscuring beyond recognition 'the basic text of homo natura'. Furthermore, such ideals, Nietzsche says, promote the 'art of alchemy in reverse, the devaluation of what is most valuable'—the devaluation of instinct, desire, pleasure, beauty (GS 292). In this way, the values that have risen to highest importance for humanity betray a total opposition to all that binds us to the physical world, a circumstance Montaigne well-appreciated: 'False opinions and ignorance of the good have poured so many strange desires into us that they have chased away almost all the natural ones' (II.12; T450, S526 [346]).

[22] While both thinkers reject asceticism as an end in itself, as the supreme ideal, they are far from denying the importance of asceticism as a *means*: both Montaigne and Nietzsche see self-control, self-discipline and self-mastery as essential to the highest form of human existence. For the return to nature they have in mind 'is not really a going-back as much as a [*coming-up*—up into] a high, free, even terrible nature and naturalness [translation altered]' (TI 9.48). And this 'higher' naturalness involves moving beyond the self-tyranny characteristic of traditional, ascetic models of virtue to a form of self-mastery that aspires to suppleness and spontaneity in thought and action (see discussion Chapter 4, Sections II and III).

Through their respective projects of re-naturalization, both thinkers aim to counteract unhealthy desires of transcendence and destroy the notion that the best human life is one that strives for emancipation from the earthly. Nietzsche's Dionysian attitude represents 'the highest affirmation' of life, a 'saying yes to reality', and directly opposes 'the *degenerate* instinct that turns against life with subterranean vindictiveness (—Christianity, Schopenhauer's philosophy, and … Plato's philosophy, the whole of idealism as typical forms)' (EH, 'BT' 2). The Dionysian way of life rejects the principal teaching of these various idealisms: earthly life must be redeemed. Time and again, Nietzsche casts his move away from Wagner and Schopenhauer, his 'recovery' from romantic pessimism, as an overcoming of the need for redemption. Consequently, in *The Case of Wagner*, he claims that there 'is nothing Wagner has thought more deeply about than redemption: his operas are the operas of redemption' (CW 3). And in *Twilight of the Idols*, he proposes that Schopenhauer is 'heir to the Christian interpretation', in his understanding of 'the great cultural facts of humanity … as paths to "redemption", as preliminary versions of "redemption", as ways of stimulating the need for "redemption"' (TI 9.21). But Schopenhauerian pessimism, the view that we can be saved from suffering only by a negation of the will to life, has its basis in a completely de-naturalized mode of evaluation. Schopenhauer's pessimistic conclusions retain their force only for so long as one accepts his core assumption that the senses and the body merely grant us access to a 'repudiated world'.

No pessimist, Montaigne affirms and celebrates all aspects of human life. No ascetic, he situates the demands of the body at the very centre of his philosophy: pleasure and sensuality are natural goods to be enjoyed, not evil temptations to be conquered. Nietzsche raises Montaigne above Schopenhauer as a philosophical exemplar not just because the *Essays* represent the antithesis to any kind of pessimistic asceticism. Nietzsche also sees in Montaigne's thought the signal feature of the Dionysian attitude: a disavowal of the language of redemption. Thoroughly at home in this world, Montaigne, in contrast to Schopenhauer and Wagner, refuses to see everyday human existence as a means to the end of something higher, as devoid of intrinsic value in its own right. From the perspective of Montaigne's re-naturalized conception of humanity, it is simply 'unbelievable' that, among all living things, 'we alone should have been brought forth in a deficient and necessitous state' (I.36; T222, S253 [166]). Through his reading of the *Essays*, Nietzsche comes to understand that our craving for escape from the human, our dissatisfaction with the earthly, is fuelled by a de-

naturalized, de-humanized measure of valuation. The duties we prescribe for ourselves and the values we attempt to live by simply bear no relation to the reality of our natural capacities, and so we end up tailoring our 'obligations to the standards of a different kind of being' (III.9; T969, S1121 [758]). Our inevitable inability to live up to these unnatural obligations ultimately prompts the invention of absurd ideas of transcendence. We thus find Seneca exclaiming: 'Oh what a vile and abject thing is Man, if he does not rise above humanity' (II.12; T588, S683 [457]). Montaigne deems such a demand not only 'impossible' but 'monstrous' (ibid.). Accordingly, in his final essay, 'On experience', he urges us to 'embrace' philosophical positions that are 'most human, most ours' (III.13; T1094, S1265 [855]). If we are to lead ourselves back to conformity with the rest of nature and develop a healthy acceptance of our bodily existence, Montaigne suggests that we must learn to leave behind the depraved notion that this life should be lived for the sake of redemption from the earthly: 'Life must be its own objective, its own purpose. Its right concern is to rule itself' (III.12; T1028, S1191 [805]).

Montaigne seeks a complete revaluation of values, the re-naturalization of the human, and this 'enormous project' involves 'redirecting human concerns from transcendent goods to earthly ones'.[23] The *Essays* call for a reorientation in our perspective: away from life-denying, otherworldly ideals, ideals that dishonour earthly life by promoting the false promise of redemption, and towards the unconditional affirmation both of the natural world and humanity's place within it: 'The more simply we entrust ourselves to Nature the more wisely we do so' (III.13; T1050, S1218 [822]). In this way, Montaigne overturns the key presuppositions of the Greco-Roman philosophical tradition—the supremacy of the soul over the body, self-denial over pleasure, reason over passion and instinct. We can thus see that, as regards his critical engagement with the historical, Montaigne deploys naturalism as his most powerful weapon. Invariably, his attacks on Stoicism and Platonism reveal their anti-natural foundations, the way in which they misconceive the human as a supremely rational, semi-divine being above the rest of creation. By contrast, if he were to have founded a school of philosophy, Montaigne says he would have taken another route, 'a more natural one, that is to say, a more convenient and inviolate one' (I.30; T198, S226 [148]). A constant refrain of the *Essays* is that we must submit to 'Nature' as our guide,

[23] Schaefer, *The Political Philosophy of Montaigne*, p. 308.

that any legitimate philosophy must conform to nature's wisdom, since its authority is absolute, surpassing the dictates of 'reason or Stoic virtue' (II.2; T328, S388 [250]). Therefore, as opposed to idealist philosophies that denounce the body and strive to weaken our relationship to the natural world, Montaigne's naturalized philosophy represents an attempt to affirm and strengthen our bonds to the earth. In fact, it represents much more than that, for at times in the *Essays* we find nature deified, described as a goddess: 'our great and powerful Mother' (I.31; T203, S232 [152]). Concluding his writing project, Montaigne seems almost to be engaged in an act of worship, exhorting the reader to return to 'Nature' and 'readily follow' her commands, giving thanks for all that she has done for him: 'I accept wholeheartedly and thankfully what Nature has done for me' (III.13; T1093-4, S1265 [855]).

The extent to which these Montaignean themes come to the fore in Nietzsche's mature thought is striking. Often it seems as though the Nietzschean task of translating humanity back into nature begins where the Montaignean revaluation leaves off. While Montaigne advises that we entrust ourselves to nature, Nietzsche, through the mouth of Zarathustra, states: 'I beseech you, my brothers, *stay true to the earth*' (Z P3).[24] Counter to ascetic ideals that denigrate earthly life by promoting dreams of escape and transcendence, Zarathustra calls for a 'new pride' that will create 'a sense for the earth' (Z 1.3). Like Montaigne, Nietzsche aims to overturn feelings of shame toward the human and the natural, to foster esteem toward all the things of this world. He aims to replace slave values that moralize and condemn natural instincts with 'naturalistic values' that help to alleviate bad conscience (KSA 12: 9[8] (WP 462)). Nietzsche also follows Montaigne in deifying the natural world, in seeing the earth as the ultimate source of meaning, as sacred: 'Sacrilege against the earth is now the most terrible thing, and to revere the entrails of the unfathomable more than a sense of the earth' (Z P3). For when hopes of otherworldly redemption are left behind, 'the earth and nature become the proper locus of the sacred'.[25] An unqualified affirmation of the natural world—including humanity, as a part of nature—thus forms the basis of Nietzsche's mature philosophy. More significant still, Part Three of *Zarathustra* ends, like the *Essays*, on a religious note of worship. On Lampert's reading, in 'The Other Dance-Song', Zarathustra intimates the reappearance of Dionysus, a god of earthly joy and

[24] 'The term "earth" or "the earthly" [*Erde oder das Irdische*] is to be found everywhere in *Zarathustra*' (De Bleeckere, "'Also sprach Zarathustra': Die Neugestaltung der 'Geburt der Tragödie'", p. 282).
[25] Parkes, "Nature and the Human 'Redivinised'", p. 184.

celebration. At the centre of Nietzsche's late works is a call for the end of otherworldly forms of spirituality and the 'return of the earthly religion of Dionysus'.[26]

The re-deification of nature and restoration of sacredness to earthly life constitutes a complete revaluation of the ideals that have dominated post-Socratic Western philosophy. Therefore, in *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche writes: '*What do you believe in*—In this: that the weight of all things must be determined anew' (GS 269). Once humanity re-naturalizes and invests all value in the here and now of this world, a new attitude to the earth becomes appropriate: gratitude. Nietzsche would see in Montaigne's wholehearted thanks to nature the essence of a noble religious disposition: 'What is amazing about the religiosity of the ancient Greeks is the enormous abundance of gratitude it exudes: it is a very noble type of man that confronts nature and life in *this* way' (BGE 49). For both thinkers, strivings for the beyond must give way to the honouring of the near, resulting in an entirely altered understanding of the meaning of redemption. In *The Wanderer and His Shadow*, Nietzsche describes the many 'chains' that 'have been laid upon man … those heavy and pregnant errors contained in the conceptions of morality, religion and metaphysics' (WS 350). From this perspective, Platonist doctrines, far from pointing the way to transcendence, drag us down into greater suffering, leading us away from the earth, the true and only source of meaning. But when these chains are broken and a religion of earthly gratitude takes hold, we come to realize that, although human existence may not have the value we once thought it had, in the sense of partaking of the divine, it is certainly not 'worth *less*' (GS 346). Consequently, we find Montaigne rejecting Plato's world of Forms in favour of the earthly 'perfection' of the primitives. Redeemed from the need for redemption, they have achieved 'that great accomplishment of knowing how to enjoy their mode-of-being in happiness and to be content with it [*de savoir heureusement jouir de leur condition et s'en contenter*]' (I.31; T209, S237 [156]). On this view, the real and fundamental joys and pleasures of this life, when valued from a completely naturalized perspective, immeasurably outweigh even the most exalted otherworldly yearnings.

[26] Lampert, *Nietzsche's Teaching*, p. 256.

Naturalism and scepticism

Having discussed our thinkers' experimentalism, scientian naturalism and condemnation of denaturalized values, I now return to the matter of their scepticism. Berry argues that we may understand Pyrrhonian scepticism as 'motivating' Montaigne's naturalism, and that this Pyrrhonian-inspired naturalism is a major influence behind the 'naturalistic turn' in Nietzsche's middle works.[27] There are a number of problems with this account. The first and most obvious difficulty is that 'Pyrrhonian scepticism is hardly ever found in Nietzsche's early and middle works'.[28] Secondly, it glosses over everything Nietzsche has to say on Pyrrhonism, both in his middle and late works. As discussed earlier, he regards a complete suspension of judgement and the goal of *ataraxia* as fundamentally life-denying. Thirdly, Nietzsche, clearly, does not see Montaigne as a Pyrrhonist, never portraying him as a decadent or as anything like a 'fanatic of mistrust'. Finally, it ignores not only Montaigne's quest for self-knowledge and the many contra-sceptical passages of the *Essays* but also his explicit statements on Pyrrhonism.

To come to terms with Montaigne's scepticism, Berry proposes that we look to the 'Apology' as 'a representative essay'.[29] But this we certainly should not do, since the 'Apology' shows Montaigne at his most hyperbolic and rhetorical; here he uses every means at his disposal to attack human presumption. To take Montaigne's comments on Pyrrhonism in the 'Apology' as a serious statement of his own view 'is to mistake his means for his … polemical ends'.[30] What we find in the 'Apology' is 'not an affirmation of Pyrrhonism but a repudiation of dogmatism': Montaigne is merely 'playing Pyrrhonist'.[31] This becomes clear when one looks to his explanation of the central Pyrrhonian doctrine, an explanation which, as Schaefer points out, 'contains more than a hint of ridicule':[32] 'If you can picture an endless confession of ignorance … then you can conceive what Pyrrhonism is. … I have tried to explain this notion as clearly as I can, because many find it hard to grasp, and its very authors present it … rather obscurely' (II.12; T485, S563 [374]). Further on in the 'Apology', Montaigne all but admits that his use of Pyrrhonism is merely strategic, when he describes the most extreme arguments of the essay as 'the ultimate rapier-stroke … employed as a remedy

[27] Berry, *Nietzsche and the Ancient Skeptical Tradition*, p. 84.
[28] Urs Sommer, "Nihilism and Skepticism in Nietzsche", p. 260.
[29] Berry, *Nietzsche and the Ancient Skeptical Tradition*, p. 81.
[30] Regosin, *The Matter of My Book*, p. 56.
[31] Frame, *Montaigne*, p. 175.
[32] Schaefer, *The Political Philosophy of Montaigne*, p. 83.

of last resort, in which you must surrender your own arms to force your opponent to lose his' (ibid. T540, S628 [419]). And once Pyrrhonism has served his polemical ends and human presumption has been thoroughly destroyed, Montaigne quickly abandons its teaching of 'ignorance'. In a later essay, 'On freedom of conscience', Pyrrhonism, and more especially the life of Pyrrho, become a subject of mockery, with Montaigne providing details of Pyrrho's 'incredible' doubt, the way his friends would have to prevent him from walking off cliffs and bumping into objects, owing to his conviction that 'the feebleness of human judgement [is] so extreme as to be unable to incline towards any decision or persuasion' (II.29; T683-4, S800 [533]).

While neither Montaigne nor Nietzsche adopts the doctrines of Pyrrhonism wholesale, they do follow that school of thought in two important respects. The first has to do with a refusal of dogmatism and a fear of 'convictions'—with the freedom to doubt all things. For Schaefer, this is the 'key point' of Montaigne's examination of ancient scepticism.[33] And there can be no better presentation of this sceptical attitude than in Nietzsche's *Anti-Christ*: 'Make no mistake about it: great spirits are sceptics. … [T]he *freedom* that comes from strength … of spirit *proves* itself through scepticism. … The freedom from every sort of conviction, being *able* to see freely is *part* of strength' (AC 54). Such freedom leads to a second sceptical quality: a certain 'caution' in inferring, a suspicion of the unconditional.[34] But this is not the severe caution of the Pyrrhonist, where belief can rise to no higher level than that of opinion. With Montaigne and Nietzsche we have a new form of scepticism, one that could be described as 'experimental' rather than Pyrrhonian.[35] Experimental in the sense that, even if both reject the idea of absolute knowledge or ultimate truth, they see a legitimate role for experiential knowledge and a route out of scepticism via experience and empiricism.[36] Experimental scepticism allows for the pursuit of a qualified, always

---

[33] Ibid.

[34] Bett, "Nietzsche on the Skeptics and Nietzsche as Skeptic", p. 77.

[35] Urs Sommer, "Nihilism and Skepticism in Nietzsche", p. 262. John O' Brien argues that 'skepticism in Montaigne's hands is not a means for casting indiscriminate doubt upon everything … but a method of enquiry, a way of judging and weighing dogmatic assertions of many kinds' ("Montaigne and antiquity", p. 61). Given Montaigne's clear repudiation of Pyrrhonism, some scholars claim that 'his epistemological position most closely resembles that of the Academic Sceptics' (Levine, *Sensual Philosophy*, p. 38). The Academic Sceptics, while ruling out the possibility of certain knowledge, still hold that some things may be held to be more probable than others. But this form of scepticism is no better placed to capture Montaigne's position, since here also a complete suspension of judgment is sought, leading to *ataraxia*.

[36] Unlike the Pyrronhists, Montaigne does not seriously question the 'apparent facts of experience': 'For us there is absolutely nothing more absurd than to say that fire is not hot; that light does not illuminate. … Those are notions conveyed to us by our senses. There is no belief in man of

provisional form of knowledge. Consequently, just as Montaigne is forever 'assaying' himself, testing his natural faculties and learning the lessons of experience, we find Nietzsche declaring: 'I approve of any form of scepticism to which I can reply "Let's try it!" But I want to hear nothing more about all the things and questions that don't admit of experiment' (GS 51). Such a scepticism—denying dogmatic certainty but always welcoming a new approach—opens up the possibility of endless experiment and enquiry, an infinity of interpretations (GS 374).[37] Indeed, on the Montaignean view, in the 'hunt for knowledge', '[i]t is only our individual weakness that makes us satisfied with what has been discovered by others or by ourselves', for '[t]here is always … a different way to proceed … [and] no end to our researches' (III.13; T1045, S1211 [817]).[38]

Nietzsche envisions what he calls a 'stronger type of scepticism', where the 'conscience' fears neither a defiant 'No' nor a 'Yes that is decisive and hard', a scepticism that is 'more dangerous and harder' than the Pyrrhonian and the Academic, one that 'does not believe but does not lose itself in the process' (BGE 208, 209). In other words, 'the experimental skepticism favoured by Nietzsche is completely different from … retreatist Pyrrhonism, with its complete refusal to make a judgment'.[39] In fact, Nietzsche claims that his 'philosophers of the future' could equally be called 'critics': 'they love to experiment', but 'these philosophers [also] admit to taking *pleasure* in saying no' (BGE 210). Undoubtedly, Montaigne shares a great deal with the philosopher as sceptic and critic. A work of sustained self-testing and experimentation, the *Essays* critically engage the Greco-Roman tradition: Montaigne says 'no' to Stoicism, Platonism and Pyrrhonism, says 'no' decisively to ascetic ideals. Nietzsche's conception of the 'philosopher of the future', however, is more expansive than sceptic and critic, embracing not just these roles, but also a third, that of value-creator. Philosophy for Nietzsche is much more than 'criticism and critical science'; the critic

---

comparable certainty' (II.12; T572, S664 [444]). Consequently, Montaigne 'ushers in a new "positive" view of skepticism that is irreducible to ancient Pyrrhonian models' (Raga Rosaleny, "The Current Debate about Montaigne's Skepticism", p. 60).

[37] While Montaigne believes that a form of progressive knowledge is possible, we find no coherent epistemology in the *Essays*. Nietzsche, by contrast, offers us an epistemological doctrine: perspectivism. Based on a radical critique of knowledge and thus informed by a sceptical attitude, perspectivism entails that all knowledge claims are conditional, partial and situational. Montaigne at times gestures toward, but never articulates, a perspectival account of knowledge.

[38] In this way, experimental scepticism retains the zeteticism of the Pyrrhonian 'framework': assuming 'the contingency and uncertainty of every assertion', experimental scepticism constitutes an open-ended and never-to-be-completed mode of enquiry (Tournon, "*Suspense* philosophique et ironie", pp. 46, 51).

[39] Urs Sommer, "Nihilism and Skepticism in Nietzsche", p. 263.

should be seen merely as an 'instrument' of the philosopher-creator (BGE 210). With this notion of the philosopher as 'commander and legislator' (BGE 211), Nietzsche makes a radical break from the ancient sceptics, insofar as 'the task of creating values requires a psychological attitude that is anything but suspensive. It requires a kind of imposing oneself on the world'.[40] And again we may see such a move prefigured in Montaigne, with his determination to re-naturalize humanity through the cultivation of earthly ideals and the creation of naturalistic values. Montaigne, it would appear, exemplifies this 'stronger scepticism'.

Yet in *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche associates Montaigne with weakness, depicting him as 'a delicate creature … [who] is frightened all too easily' (BGE 208). Perhaps, for Nietzsche's taste, Montaigne's 'no' to philosophies of denial is too muted, his 'yes' to life and to naturalism too indecisive. After all, Montaigne's criticism and yes-saying come to us from behind a conservative mask. Unlike Nietzsche, he is simply not in a position to offer his readers the kind of 'certainty of value standards' that *Beyond Good and Evil* recommends (BGE 210). But perhaps Nietzsche overstates his distance from Montaigne in order to emphasize his own truly unique conception of the philosophical life, a conception that has value-creation as the main and distinctive task of the philosopher. For the judgment on Montaigne's scepticism in *Beyond Good and Evil* is somewhat at odds with a far more positive evaluation in an unpublished note from the previous year (1885), where he praises Montaigne's 'brave and [good-natured] [*tapfere und frohmüthige*]' scepticism (KSA 11: 36[7] (WP 367)).[41] Furthermore, it seems to clash with later comments in *Ecce Homo*, where, after describing sceptics as 'the only *respectable* types among the philosophical tribes', Nietzsche singles Montaigne out for special mention, claiming that he has some of the essayists' 'mischief' in his spirit (EH 2.3). This may well represent an admission that Montaigne, too, embodies a 'scepticism of audacious manliness' (BGE 209).

Finally, Berry argues that Montaigne and Nietzsche's scepticism motivates their naturalism; however, the direction of influence runs in the opposite direction: it is their naturalism—more specifically, their view of the human being as fundamentally embodied, as body through and through—that informs their epistemological outlook. In the 'Apology', Montaigne's sceptical assault on knowledge begins with the recognition that '[o]ur senses are privileged to be the ultimate frontiers of our perception: beyond

[40] Bett, "Nietzsche on the Skeptics and Nietzsche as Skeptic", p. 79.
[41] Translation altered.

this there is nothing' (II.12; T573, S664-5 [444]). Our five senses, that is, form 'the ultimate boundary of our faculty of knowledge' (ibid.). And as regards attaining true knowledge of the world, this situation presents insurmountable difficulties, since, as he has earlier observed, '[h]uman eyes [like each of the other senses] can only perceive things in accordance with such Forms as they know' (ibid. T516, S600 [399]). Montaigne goes on to speculate that there might well be other animals with additional 'sense-faculties' that 'enjoy a fuller life, a more complete life than we do' (ibid. T574, S666 [445]). He concludes the 'Apology' by reasserting that 'a man … can see only with his own eyes, grasp only with his own grasp' (ibid. T588, S683 [457]). If we look now to *Daybreak*, the extent to which Nietzsche follows this line of thinking is remarkable. In a section entitled 'In prison', he states:

> My eyes … can only see a certain distance, and it is within the space encompassed by this distance that I live and move. … [I]t is by these horizons, within which each of us encloses his senses as if behind prison walls, that we *measure* the world (D 117).

And later, in Book V, he has this to say:

> Learn to know! Yes! But always as a man! … Never to be able to see into things out of any other eyes but *these*? And what uncountable kinds of creatures may there not be whose organs are better equipped for knowledge! (D 483)

Section III: Body Philosophy

> I who am always down-to-earth in my handling of anything loathe that inhuman wisdom which seeks to render us disdainful and hostile toward the care of our bodies. I reckon that it is as injudicious to set our minds against natural pleasures as to allow them to dwell on them. … I … sedulously welcome the pleasures of this life (III.13; T1086, S1256 [849]).

Inhuman wisdom

To be considered legitimate, any religion of earthly gratitude would have to advocate a wholehearted embrace of our corporeal condition. Accordingly, in the philosophies of Montaigne and Nietzsche, we find the body consecrated, presented as the ultimate source of joy and happiness. The translation of humanity back into nature and re-conception of the human as animal and mortal compel us to acknowledge the fundamentally embodied nature of our existence. Through our bodies, we are united not only with the rest of animal life but also with all the features of the natural world. However, thanks to the predominance of denaturalized values and ascetic ideals, the importance of the body has long been denied, the text of *homo natura* overlaid with interpretations that stress the wickedness of the senses and the evils of the flesh, promoting alienation from sensuous experience. Consequently, for both thinkers, the re-naturalization of values centrally involves a reconsideration of the status of the body; they both seek a complete reappraisal of the body's role in the search for self-knowledge and the attainment of wisdom. For, inevitably, when the earth becomes a sacred domain and thoughts of transcendence are left behind, our most basic bodily instincts, passions and desires attain a new weight and validity.

Montaigne's opposition to the 'inhuman wisdom' of philosophies that condemn the body pervades the *Essays*. In contrast to the Socratic view, which understands the body as an obstacle to true knowledge, as something the soul must disregard and detach itself from, Montaigne repeatedly advises us to heed the wisdom of bodily needs and immerse ourselves in the pleasures of the senses. In 'On solitude', feigning mediocrity by referring to his 'commonplace' soul, he states: 'Wiser men with a strong and vigorous soul can forge for themselves a tranquillity which is wholly spiritual. … I must help sustain myself with pleasures of the body' (I.39; T241, S276 [182]). For

Montaigne, the body must not be dominated by the soul, but valued on equal terms, and granted the utmost significance in any philosophical way of life. As a consequence, if he is certain of anything, it is of the madness of striving to separate the physical and the mental: 'The body is a major part of our being. … Those who wish to take our two principal pieces apart and to sequester one from the other are wrong. We must on the contrary couple and join them closely together' (II.17; T622, S726-7 [484]). For this reason, from the perspective of Montaigne's down-to-earth philosophy, achieving a 'harmonious' balance between body and soul represents the very essence of wisdom (ibid.). And when considering those who reject such wisdom, those who, 'from an uncouth sensibility, hold bodily pleasures in disgust', he struggles to restrain his contempt, asking, (for the most) rhetorically: 'Why do they not also give up breathing?' (III.13; T1087, S1257 [850])

The mutual interpenetration and mutual support of body and soul is a theme Montaigne recurs to time and again. He finds the ideal of detachment from the body not just unwholesome but ridiculous. Given the intimate relationship between the mental and the physical, the way in which, for instance, a substance like wine can confuse our thoughts, or the way in which mental sharpness seems to decline in line with physical frailty—we tend to be more alert when well than ill—he counsels that 'the powers and actions of the soul must be examined not elsewhere but here, at home in our bodies' (II.12; T531, S617 [411]). The intimate fusion of body and soul means that every bodily movement and instinct, every feeling of physical pleasure or pain, has some significance for our mental lives: 'It is certain that our conceptions, our judgements and our mental faculties in general are all effected by the changes and alterations of the body. Those alterations are ceaseless' (ibid. T547, S635 [424]). Such interdependence between body and soul leads him to severely question the claim that ancient Stoic practitioners were able to maintain constancy in the face of physical agony, that reason, performing its duties perfectly, enables us to prevail over the most piercing bodily experiences: 'Are we to make our flesh believe that lashes from leather thongs merely tickle it. … Are we to force that natural universal and inherent characteristic which can be seen in every living creature under heaven: namely, that pain causes trembling?' (I.14; T55, S58 [37]) For Montaigne, human reason, however firm and well-developed, offers little defence against extreme pain and sickness. For even in the case of the most rational individual who ever lived, Socrates, notwithstanding his life-long practice devoted to separating soul from body, Montaigne insists: 'Let the saliva of some wretched dog slaver over

[his hand] … that … would put a sudden end to all his wisdom' (II.12; T532, S619 [412]).

The wisdom of the *Essays* is a bodily wisdom. Montaigne, through his literary self-portrait, aims to represent the features of his body no less than his mind. Even as we follow the flow of his thoughts on the page, bodily concerns take centre stage: he continually informs us of his state of physical health and vitality, particularly in the late essays, when, in old age, his suffering from 'the stone' begins to intensify. Departing from traditional philosophical discourse, Montaigne invites the reader to always bear in mind the bodily condition of the author. Furthermore, as Ann Hartle notes, not only does he stress the presence of his own body but he also ridicules other philosophers 'by reminding them in vivid and often comic terms of … the most base and shameful bodily functions'.[42] For instance, in 'On some lines in Virgil', having observed of our physical make-up that 'our delights and our waste matters are lodged higgledy-piggledy together', Montaigne goes on to admit: 'When I picture to myself the most reflective and the most wise of men in such postures, I hold it as an affront that he should claim to be reflective and wise' (III.5; T855, S992 [669]). In Montaigne's view, human presumption leads us to conceive the human being as non-bodily in essence, to ignore the so-called base pleasures and lower functions, functions that we share with the 'beasts'—a situation that, as a naturalist, he finds worthy of humour, not shame. So in direct contrast to those philosophers who tend to forget the body, Montaigne feels compelled to describe his 'build', 'complexion' and 'bodily endowments' (II.17; T623-5, S728-30 [485-7]). Considering the extent to which the *Essays* capture his corporeality, Montaigne, as we have seen, even goes so far as to suggest that the work may be understood as 'of one substance with its author' (II.18; T648, S755 [504]).[43]

---

[42] Hartle, *Michel de Montaigne*, p. 3.

[43] In this regard, one should also bear in mind what many commentators recognize as the most striking characteristic of Montaigne's literary style or mode of expression: its concreteness. By way of the most vivid visual and tactile images and metaphors, he seeks to render philosophical thought in material terms. Sayce stresses Montaigne's acute 'appreciation of the corporeal substance of words' (*The Essays of Montaigne*, p. 280), while Regosin suggests that in the *Essays* 'thought assumes a kind of concreteness, a materiality' (*The Matter of My Book*, p. 110). To give just one example: 'Faults … as soon as they strike me they cling to me and will not leave me unless shaken off' (III.5; T853, S990 [667]). And Hugo Friedrich observes that Montaigne's 'preferred images are those of body movement of any kind' (*Montaigne*, p. 371): 'My concepts and judgments can only fumble their way forward, swaying, stumbling, tripping over' (I.26; T145, S164 [107]). Molner thus argues that part of what Nietzsche finds so impressive about Montaigne's style 'is the willingness to allow words their physical value' ("The Influence of Montaigne on Nietzsche", p. 87).

The philosophy of the *Essays* constitutes an unconditional acceptance of the body; Montaigne's love of live is essentially a love of bodily existence. Such a celebration of the body, so seemingly out of place in a work of philosophy, must have struck Nietzsche forcefully, as he began to engage the *Essays* in the early 1870s, particularly in view of the dominant influences on his intellectual life at the time, Schopenhauerian pessimism and Wagnerian romanticism. For Schopenhauer, bodily desires and appetites, adding fuel to the fire of the will, represent the principal source of human suffering. The conviction that we must redeem ourselves from the claims of the body—and from the scourge of sexuality especially—is central to his philosophy of ascetic resignation. Similarly, in Wagner's *Gesamtkunstwerke* we find the body and sexuality denigrated, or as Nietzsche will later write, Wagner 'withdrew from the *corrupted* world with a praise to chastity' (CW 3). Hence, when reading the *Essays*, Nietzsche encountered a voice radically at odds with his early exemplars—with the majority of philosophers in the history of Western philosophy, who for 'thousands of years' have striven to 'get rid of the body, this miserable *ideé fixe* of the senses' (TI 3.1). But more than that, what Nietzsche encountered was a voice truly in harmony with his own, one consistent with *The Birth of Tragedy* and his conception of the Dionysian.

From the first, Nietzsche makes clear that the Dionysian wisdom of the Greeks couldn't be more remote from an 'incorporeal spirituality', claiming that anyone who approaches such religiosity in search of asceticism 'will be forced to turn his back in dismay and disappointment' (BT 3). He describes the barbaric festivals that initiated the cult of Dionysus as events of ecstatic jubilation, given over to sexual frenzy and sensual excess. As regards the choral songs (Dionysian dithyrambs) that were at the centre of cultic practice, Nietzsche stresses that performances required 'the symbolism of the entire body … the full gesture of dance with its rhythmical movements of every limb' (BT 2). The body retains its primacy in later and less primitive forms of Dionysian expression, as in the satyr chorus that develops out of folk music and forms the basis of Attic tragedy. Nietzsche maintains that the spectator of tragic art saw the satyr as 'a proclaimer of wisdom from the deepest heart of nature, an emblem of the sexual omnipotence of nature' (BT 8). Firmly rooted in nature and the body, the Dionysian represents an attitude—very much in line with the *Essays*—that would sanctify the sensual and the sexual. The affinities between Montaigne's delight in corporeal existence and his own Dionysian affirmation of the body thus suggests yet another

reason why Nietzsche comes to present Montaigne as his most admired philosophical exemplar in the *Untimely Meditations*.

Body through and through

Following Montaigne, Nietzsche conceives the free spirit of his middle works as an assayer, as a being who lives 'experimentally', and he goes on, in his late works, to 'baptize' the 'philosophers of the future' with the name 'attempters' (HAH P4; BGE 42, 210). Furthermore, for both thinkers, such a philosophical approach is essentially a matter of bodily experience and experiment; the self-knowledge they both seek is an understanding grounded in the body's drives, instincts, movements, actions and sensations. In Montaigne's case, no clearer indication of this can be found than in the final essay of his collection, 'On experience', which represents the culmination of his philosophy, after nearly two decades of writing and reflection, and the essence of his wisdom, based on nearly sixty years of living. Having engaged in a thoroughgoing examination of the workings of his own mind, and having explored the doctrines and practices of the various schools of Greco-Roman thought, Montaigne chooses to conclude his writing project not with profound insights on the nature of human consciousness or with a summary of the wisdom of the ancients, but rather with a detailed personal history of his own body. We learn about his diet and digestion, his sleeping habits, his fear of certain types of smells, and the state of his sight and hearing. For Montaigne, the *Essays*, while 'exemplary enough' as regards the health of the mind, really come into their own on questions to do with the health of the body, given his vast knowledge of many sicknesses and symptoms (III.13; T1056, S1224 [826]). But the attention he devotes to the body in 'On experience' has less to do with the ailments of old age than with his relentless efforts to reorient our gaze away from human transcendence and back to the earthiest experiences of the body. Montaigne urges us to accept that, for the most part, like all other creatures, our lives are defined by the most basic functions of the body—even if we presumptuously like to think otherwise. Making it 'a part of his rhetoric to talk plainly and unapologetically about his body', he completes his self-portrait with an essay that, rejoicing in every aspect of corporeality,

includes an account of the timing and frequency of his bowel movements (III.13; T1063, S1232 [832]).[44]

As Book III of the *Essays* progresses, Montaigne's focus on the body becomes ever more pronounced; 'On experience', merely offers a final, emphatic word on a much-emphasized theme of his later writing. Paradoxically, it is only as old age robs him of his vigour and his bodily powers begin to deteriorate that Montaigne comes to regard the body as the chief source of self-knowledge. To an ever greater extent, he looks to the body's wisdom, and strives to heed its advice, by closely monitoring his declining physical condition. Therefore, while Montaigne for much of the *Essays* advocates a harmonious balance between body and mind, as his thinking develops, this balance 'is increasingly tilted in favour of the body'.[45] As a consequence, by the time of 'On the art of conversation', we find him asking the reader to always bear in mind that the human being is a creature 'whose nature is wondrously corporeal [*merveilleusement corporelle*]' (III.8; T909, S1054 [710]). Moreover, in the next essay, 'On vanity'—in the midst of an examination of the ridiculous ideas unconstrained intellectual reasoning often leads us to endorse—Montaigne suggests that we can arrive at a better understanding of human existence by looking at it entirely in bodily terms: 'But life is material motion in the body, an activity, by its very essence, imperfect and unruly: I work to serve it on its own terms' (III.9; T967, S1118 [756]). And this reading seems to be confirmed by a comment he makes later, in the same essay, when he describes himself as 'wholly material' (ibid. p. T978, S1130 [764]).

As regards discussion of the body, Nietzsche's work follows a similar trajectory to that of Montaigne, in the sense that the emphasis on issues of bodily health—issues to do with diet, climate and physiology—steadily increases. In *The Gay Science*, for instance, he claims that 'an immense field of work' opens up before the experimental philosopher who engages in a study of morality, since numerous, long-neglected questions now present themselves, questions such as: 'Do we know the moral effects of foods? Is there a philosophy of nutrition?'(GS 7) It is in *Zarathustra*, however, that we find Nietzsche's boldest and most far-reaching statements on the body. If Montaigne

[44] Levine, *Sensual Philosophy*, p. 161. Levine also notes that 'Montaigne's desire to recognize and accept the body in a healthy manner sometimes seems to take excessive forms', citing a passage in 'On some lines in Virgil', where he exhorts us to keep pleasures 'warm like a broody hen … to come forward and welcome them' (III, 5; T871, S1010 [681])'. For Levine, such excess can be understood as a reaction against the extremely negative view of the body central to the Christianity-dominated intellectual climate of his times (p. 160).

[45] Sayce, The Essays of *Montaigne*, p. 182.

understands himself as 'wholly material', Nietzsche, through the mouth of Zarathustra, declares: 'Body am I through and through, and nothing besides; and soul is merely a word for something about the body' (Z 1.4). Like Montaigne, he also sees the body as his main guide and conceives self-knowledge in terms of practical activity grounded in bodily movement and action: 'The body is a great reason. … [I]t does not say I but does I' (ibid.). More significant still, for Nietzsche, rationality and the faculties of the mind, rather than constituting the essence of what it means to be human, ultimately serve the needs and demands of the body, or as he puts it, '[a] tool of your body is your small reason' (ibid.). In other words, physiology rules, and what Nietzsche calls great reason 'belongs to the very blueprint of the body'.[46] Hence, in a note from 1886, a year after the publication of *Zarathustra*, he writes that, in comparison to the soul, the 'phenomenon of the body is the richer, clearer, more comprehensible phenomenon: to be discussed first, methodologically' (KSA 12: 5[56] (WP 489)).

Body philosophy

Unsurprisingly, then, when Nietzsche comes to write *Ecce Homo*, his philosophical autobiography, examination of the body's cycles of health and sickness as well as descriptions of physiological characteristics take centre stage. Indeed, autobiographical passages are a marked feature of his late writing, not only in his final published works but also in the new prefaces he adds to many of his earlier works in 1886. Of course, if one, as Nietzsche does, conceives philosophy as an art of living, as a lived experience that transforms one's character, and if one, furthermore, conceives the philosopher as an experimenter and attempter in different ways of life, as he also does, then naturally one must view biography and philosophy as necessarily and intimately related. But for Nietzsche, *all* philosophy is inescapably biographical, regardless of how abstract and seemingly unrelated to a thinker's life. In *Human, All Too Human*, he writes: 'No matter how far a man may extend himself with his knowledge, no matter how objectively he may come to view himself, in the end it can yield to him nothing but his own biography' (HAH 513). In his mature thought, this view of philosophy as biography

[46] Gerhardt, "The Body, the Self and the Ego", p. 274. Volker Gerhardt argues that 'the formula of the "*great reason*" of the body … stands at the undeclared centre of Nietzsche's experimental philosophy' (p. 273). He explains the formula thus: 'since reason is only found in a certain substrate, namely the body, this substrate must itself be seen as capable of reason. And since the substrate is prior to, and more extensive than, the "rational" capacity it supports, it can indeed be said to be "greater"' (p. 275).

takes a distinct turn in the direction of bodily instincts and 'drives'. Thus, in *Beyond Good and Evil*, having claimed that there is 'nothing whatever' 'impersonal' in the thought of the philosopher, Nietzsche goes on to state that a philosopher's morality 'bears decided and decisive witness to *who* he is—that is, in what order of rank the innermost drives of his nature stand in relation to each other' (BGE 6).

At first glance, *Ecce Homo* and the *Essays* would seem to represent radically different forms of autobiographical writing. On the one hand, Montaigne, in the course of fashioning his self-portrait, perfects a tone of modest self-deprecation, striving to create a work that—if his many assurances on the matter are to be believed—faithfully documents every biographical detail. On the other, Nietzsche, in *Ecce Homo*, adopts a tone of extraordinary boastfulness, offering an extremely selective and often misleading account of his life thus far. However, such differences should not blind us to the undeniable similarities that remain, since looking closer one finds clear and important parallels between the two works, especially when one places *Ecce Homo* and 'On experience' side by side. As a thinker who not only acknowledges the close relationship between philosophy and biography but also puts considerations of the body at the forefront of his thought, Montaigne is uniquely placed to offer Nietzsche guidance on his preferred style of autobiographical writing.[47] For both thinkers, the self-knowledge that informs their respective philosophies has its basis in the 'great reason' of the body; it is the 'richer phenomenon' of the body that they both seek to articulate. *Ecce Homo* follows 'On experience' in being a 'striking instantiation' of what could be called 'body-philosophy'.[48]

A remarkable passage in the 'Apology' brings home the extent to which Montaigne understands the human being primarily as a physical organism, its physiology determined by the characteristics of the natural environment: 'experience makes it clear that the very form of our being—not only our colour, build, complexion and behaviour but our mental faculties as well—depend upon our native air, climate and soil' (II.12; T559-60, S648-9 [433-4]). He suggests that particular climates have a bearing on intelligence—temperate climates fostering wisdom; tropical climates, dullness—and that types of terrain dictate temperament—fertile, soft plains promoting

[47] In this case, as so often, Montaigne is free of a particular 'prejudice' Nietzsche ascribes to other philosophers: 'Gradually it has become clear to me what every great philosophy so far has been: namely, the personal confession of its author and a kind of involuntary and unconscious memoir' (BGE 6). Fully aware that 'there is absolutely nothing impersonal about the philosopher', Montaigne's philosophy constitutes an exceedingly conscious memoir (ibid.).
[48] Large, "Introduction", *Ecce Homo*, p. xxv.

passivity (ibid.). In keeping with the general thrust of the 'Apology', Montaigne's immediate aim, in making such comments, is to draw attention to human 'weakness', the limitations inherent to our natural condition, the variability and inconsistency of our rationality. However, when celebrating human life in 'On experience', he sees an understanding of such matters as our physiological reaction to certain foods, the effects of climate, and the idiosyncrasies of digestion, as constituting the essence of self-knowledge. From the perspective of Montaigne's body-orientated philosophy, knowledge of a thinker's diet, whether they eat salted meat, like salads and fruit, are partial to sauces; knowledge of their dominant sense (Montaigne's is smell); and knowledge of their favoured climate, whether they function better in the summer or winter months, must form part of any comprehensive examination of their thought (III.13; T1078-85, S1248-55 [843-9]).

That Nietzsche looks to the *Essays* as a model work of philosophical autobiography there is no doubt. Not only do many of the concerns that animate Montaigne's writing in 'On experience' figure prominently in *Ecce Homo* but what Nietzsche has to say sometimes amounts to restatements of views already expressed in the *Essays*. So whereas Montaigne holds that the very form of our being depends on 'native air, climate and soil', Nietzsche alerts us to the importance of 'the questions of *location* and *climate*':

> Nobody is free to live everywhere; and someone with great tasks that require all his strength has particularly limited options here. The influence of climate on *metabolism*, inhibiting it or speeding it up, is so significant that a bad choice over place and climate can not only alienate someone from his task but can keep him from it altogether (EH 2.2).

More conspicuous still, while Montaigne, after advancing the idea of a correlation between temperate climates and wisdom, offers Athens as an example of a city where dry air has had a marked influence on intelligence, Nietzsche—pausing briefly to remark on the problems posed by the German climate—continues his discussion as follows:

> Just list the places where there are and have been brilliant people, where wit, refinement, and malice were components of happiness, where genius has,

> almost necessarily, felt itself at home: they all have superbly dry air. Paris, Provence, Florence, Jerusalem, Athens—these names prove something: dry air and clear skies are *conditions* for genius (ibid.)

In addition, like Montaigne, Nietzsche attaches as much weight to 'the question of nutrition' as that of place and climate—even greater weight, perhaps, considering he describes it as a matter that concerns the very 'salvation of humanity' (EH 2.1). If Montaigne reveals his fondness for melons, his complex relationship with radishes ('I first of all found that radishes agreed with me; then they did not'), reveals that he lunches early, to aid digestion, that he prefers his bread unsalted (III.13; T1082-4, S1252-4 [846-8]), Nietzsche rails against the peculiarities of German cooking, ridiculing the eating of soup before meals, bemoaning the overcooking of meat. And as regards dietary advice, he counsels abstinence from alcohol, but recommends tea in the morning, and suggests that indigestion can be helped by avoiding 'protracted meals' (EH 2.1).

Unlike Montaigne, however, Nietzsche links questions of climate, location and nutrition directly to those of philosophy. For instance, when explaining why it took him so long to fully appreciate the significance of proper nutrition, he blames the 'worthlessness' of German education, and more specifically 'its "idealism"', which had led him to 'lose sight of *reality*' from the outset (ibid.). In 'On experience', Montaigne, as usual, leaves it to the reader to make the connection between the extensive discussion of his body and diet that dominates the essay and the repudiation of Platonic idealism that appears in its closing pages. Here, praising those opinions in philosophy that are 'most solid, that is to say, most human', he admits his strong aversion to forms of philosophical speculation that promote 'escape' from our humanity (III.13; T1094-6, S1265-8 [855-7]). Montaigne's approach in 'On experience' mirrors that of 'On the Cannibals', in the way that, in both essays, he strives to set up the severest possible contrast between otherworldly philosophies that advocate transcendence of the human, and a naturalized philosophy, orientated toward the earthly. In the earlier of the two essays, he achieves this by means of an opposition between descriptions of the lives of the primitives of the New World and Plato's account of the earliest civilization in *The Republic*; in the latter, with Platonism again his target, he relies on first immersing the reader in the most vivid experiences of the body.

But of course, Nietzsche adopts a similar tactic in *Ecce Homo*: he intends the humorous criticisms of German cooking and the rather playful account of his diet, as a mocking but defiant response to contemporary German philosophy—Hegelianism in particular. There is, however, much more going on, both in *Ecce Homo* and in 'On experience', than the attempt to ridicule idealist philosophy, of whatever stripe. For both Montaigne and Nietzsche, discussion of the questions of climate, place and nutrition serves a much deeper purpose. In a statement that could equally have come from the pen of Montaigne, Nietzsche explains his position thus:

> I will be asked why I have been talking about all these petty matters that people usually think are not worth worrying about. … Answer: these petty concerns—nourishment, location, climate … are far more important than all the concepts people have considered important so far. This is exactly where people must start [*relearning*] [*anfangen umzulernen*] (EH 2.10).[49]

A relearning that paves the way to a revaluation, the re-naturalization of values. For it is only because of the triumph of a de-naturalized, de-humanized system of valuation that matters of nourishment, location and climate are commonly seen as 'petty matters', as 'petty concerns'. Ascetic ideals promote the notion not only that bodily needs can be transcended but that they should be transcended, that the highest form of human life—redeemed from the consideration of such trivialities as diet and physiology—should cultivate detachment from the body. But once we abandon ascetic ideals and the Plato-Christian values that ground them, abandon the perverse desire to transcend the human, we come to realize that, as essentially bodily creatures, by ignoring the questions of nourishment, place, and climate, we have managed to disvalue the most valuable and 'to revere the entrails of the unfathomable more than a sense of the earth!' (Z P3)

In 'On experience', Montaigne strives to communicate a form of philosophy that invests ultimate value in the body, to reawaken reverence for the body and the earth—an immense task, given the predominance of ascetic ideals and the importance of Plato-Christian values to European culture. Devoting page after page to the importance of care of the body and matters of diet, he attempts to gently alter the reader's perspective, their bias against the appropriateness of such a discussion, by making them fully aware of

[49] Translation altered.

their own bodies: he evokes certain tastes and sounds, the pleasures of sleep, the sufferings of various illnesses and physical symptoms. Nietzsche, employing a less subtle method, prefers, through overstatement, to shock his audience out of their conventional views: 'All prejudices come from the intestines' (EH 2.1). Despite this marked difference in style, it is conspicuous how both thinkers, in making their respective cases for the body, pay exceptional attention to one sense in particular: smell. Montaigne, in his final essay, admits to a 'mortal fear of smells' (III.12; T1084, S1254 [848]), but betrays his acute sensitivity to odour much earlier in his writing, when he dedicates an essay, 'On smells', to the topic of smells in general. Here, describing how various odours possess the power to greatly alter his 'spirits', he claims the ability to scent noxious fumes at greater distances than any other individual (I.55; T300-1, S353 [228-9]). Nietzsche, with typical hyperbole, goes much further, alleging to have a quite extraordinary nose: 'I can physiologically perceive … the very centre, the 'intestines', of every soul—I can *smell* it' (EH 1.8). In fact, so crucial is this highly developed sense for his philosophical task, he declares that his 'genius' resides in his 'nostrils' (EH 4.1).

Perhaps Nietzsche emphasizes smell because it is by far the most sensitive sense—capable of distinguishing between hundreds of substances, from the minutest of quantities—and the most immediate—in contrast to the physiological processes involved in other senses, the olfactory nerves connect directly to the brain. Or perhaps, like Montaigne, he was blessed with an unusually receptive nose. Perhaps both. Whatever the reason, it was certainly not lost on Nietzsche that, in championing the sense of smell—a sense whose importance is often overlooked, despite its potency—he was very much echoing the body philosophy of the *Essays*. Accordingly, a few sections earlier, having just revealed that it is to French writers he returns to 'again and again', we find him proudly announcing that he has 'something of Montaigne's mischief' in his 'body' (EH 2.3). Considering the seriousness with which Nietzsche writes about his own physiology and how much he makes of his own bodily health, the way in which he 'has always instinctively chosen the *correct* remedy for bad states', the significance of such a remark cannot be overstated (EH 1.2). After all, it comes from a thinker who believes that his bodily health, more than anything else, distinguishes him as a philosopher: 'sick thinkers are in the majority in the history of philosophy' (GS P2). Believes, furthermore, that, 'on a grand scale, philosophy has been no more than … *a misunderstanding of the body*', in so far as metaphysical cravings for 'some Apart, Beyond, Outside, Above' were not taken for what they were: the symptoms of sick

bodies (ibid.). By claiming to have something of Montaigne in his body, Nietzsche offers no clearer indication of the extent of his admiration, no stronger endorsement of Montaigne's life as a philosopher.

Revering Montaigne from first to last, two remarkable tributes to Montaigne bookend Nietzsche's life as a philosopher, both of which associate Montaigne with bodily health—in 'Schopenhauer as Educator' Nietzsche portrays Montaigne's writing as a uniquely vitalizing force: 'as soon as I glance at him I grow a leg or a wing' (SE 2). On the Nietzschean account, Montaigne's affirmation of earthly existence, his resolute this-worldliness, is symptomatic of a robust physiological health. Acutely aware of the physiological basis of philosophy, Montaigne continually implicates his own body in his thought (from descriptions of his physical characteristics and physiological idiosyncrasies to the suggestion that author and book are of one substance). Indeed, given the extent to which the *Essays* anticipate the Nietzschean understanding of philosophy as essentially a biography of the body, and given the stress that Nietzsche lays on Montaigne's bodily health, Molner is perhaps right to suggest that it is through Montaigne's example that Nietzsche comes to understand 'philosophy as part of physiology'.[50] For both thinkers, a reorientation of our attitude toward the body, the recognition that we are 'wholly material', obliges us to concede the intimate relationship between physiological need and philosophical thought.

What is more, as Heitsch observes, Montaigne and Nietzsche seem to be of one mind that 'language itself originates in the physical or physiological facts of human nature'.[51] In *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche laments the difficulty, if not the impossibility, of translating the 'tempo' of a certain literary style from one language to another, in view of the fact that any such style would be 'grounded in the character of the race, or—to be more physiological—in the average tempo of its "metabolism"'

[50] Molner, "The Influence of Montaigne on Nietzsche", p. 81. For Molner, 'Montaigne's balance of soul and body' inspires Nietzsche's notion of 'philosophy as part of physiology' (ibid.). However, while it is no doubt true that Nietzsche admired Montaigne greatly for this reason, Montaigne's influence in this regard has much more to do with his naturalism, with his determination in the *Essays* to bring humanity back into conformity with the rest of nature. The question of the relationship between philosophy and physiology is thus, for both thinkers, one of fundamental philosophical significance. Also, considering the impact of the German Materialist movement on intellectual life in Germany in the 1850s and 60s, Nietzsche would have become aware of the philosophical significance of physiology much earlier that his initial encounter with Montaigne (in the early 1870's). Most crucially, as is clear from his correspondence, Nietzsche read Albert Lange's *History of Materialism* in the late 1860's (Stack, *Lange and Nietzsche*, p. 13). Nevertheless, Molner is right to stress the great importance of Montaigne for Nietzsche as a thinker who puts physiological considerations at the very centre of his thought.

[51] Heitsch, *Practicing Reform in Montaigne's Essais*, p. 69.

(BGE 28). Returning to this theme in *Ecce Homo*, his focus shifts to a discussion of how the relationship between style, tempo and physiology pertains to his own '*art of style*'. The best type of style, he declares, '*communicate*[s] a state, an inner tension of pathos, with signs, including the tempo of these signs' (EH 3.4). No less than Nietzsche, Montaigne sees a direct and intimate connection between writing style and physiological make-up. Through the rendering of abstract thought in metaphor and image, he seeks not only to constantly engage the sensuous experience of the reader but also to evoke the physical presence of the author. To use Regosin's felicitous phrasing: 'The language of the *Essays* aims at being an incarnating medium'.[52] Like Nietzsche, Montaigne understands his unique style as being 'grounded' in his 'physical aspects', as embodying his distinctive physiology.[53]

Turning the will to life into philosophy

To fully understand Nietzsche's devotion to the *Essays*, and to gain a complete appreciation of his claim to have something of Montaigne in his body, it is crucial to observe another conspicuous feature of their philosophical-autobiographical writing: both grant considerable attention to the subject of their own bodily illnesses and sufferings. Physiologically speaking, more than a sensitivity to smells or a preference for dry air, what unites Montaigne and Nietzsche is their shared experience of extreme pain and sickness. Therefore, in Montaigne, Nietzsche found not only a kindred spirit intellectually but also a 'partner in torment' physically.[54] And for both thinkers, this physical torment is of great import philosophically, fundamentally informing their respective attitudes to life. Consequently, whereas 'On experience' details Montaigne's

[52] Regosin, *The Matter of My Book*, p. 199.
[53] Heitsch, *Practicing Reform in Montaigne's Essais*, p. 74. In line with this reading, Rodolphe Gasché argues that the text of *Ecce Homo* is one in which 'the constitution of a body is gradually worked out … [T]he body … becomes readable through a chain of metaphors' ("*Ecce Homo* or the Written Body", p. 113). There is, however, a crucial difference between Montaigne and Nietzsche on the whole question of style, language and physiology, insofar as 'Nietzsche's metaphors regarding the founding nature of the body' cannot be understood in terms of 'simple metaphors of foundation' (Blondel, *Nietzsche: The Body and Culture*, p. 206). In a way that Montaigne's do not, 'Nietzsche's metaphors on physiology … lead … to the philological notion of interpretation' (p. 205). This is because Nietzsche views will to power as fundamentally a 'reinterpreting, restructuring and shaping force' (GM 2.12): 'all existence' is 'essentially an interpreting-existence' (GS 374). Therefore, given that, on the Nietzschean account, it is through our bodily drives and affects that we interpret the world, '[a]sking what the body is means asking what interpretation is' (Blondel, *Nietzsche: The Body and Culture*, p. 216).
[54] Molner, "The Influence of Montaigne on Nietzsche", p. 85.

'coronary palpitations and migraines', his 'spasms and convulsions' (III.13; T1067-9, S1236-9 [835-7]), *Ecce Homo* recounts Nietzsche's 'unremitting' headaches, his 'exhausting bouts of vomiting', and his eye problems, verging 'dangerously close to blindness' (EH 1.1). Here again, there can be little question that, when making such comments, Nietzsche has Montaigne in mind. In fact, in *The Gay Science* he refers specifically to Montaigne's capacity to joke 'so agreeably' about his afflictions (GS 22). Seeking to emulate his exemplar's cheerful response to suffering, Nietzsche takes a similarly humorous line: 'A doctor who treated me for a long time as a neurological patient finally said: "No! The problem is not your nerves, I am the one who is nervous"' (EC 1.1).

What we discover in *Ecce Homo* and 'On experience', however, is not simply a catalogue of illness, or a list of debilitating symptoms; both thinkers offer a record of recovery as well as of sickness. And it is the joy of the former, not the pain of the latter, they are keen to emphasize. For Montaigne, a restoration of health, however brief, outweighs any preceding suffering: 'But is there anything so delightful as that sudden revolution when I pass from the extreme pain of voiding my stone and recover, in a flash, the beauteous light of health. … Oh how much more beautiful health looks after illness' (III.13; T1071-2, S1241 [838]). Here is Nietzsche describing his return to health, after a prolonged illness:

> I discovered life anew, as it were, myself included, I tasted all good and even small things in ways that other people cannot easily do,—I created my philosophy from out of my will to health, to *life*. … [P]ay careful attention: the years of my lowest vitality were the ones when I *stopped* being a pessimist (EH 1.2).

This last statement holds the key to Nietzsche's conception of true 'health', a health vigorous enough to combat the greatest suffering, yet not succumb to despair, a health immune to the temptation of philosophies of denial. And it is precisely his ability to transform bodily suffering into a philosophy of earthly affirmation that, he believes, gives him the right to open *Ecce Homo* with a section entitled 'Why I am so wise'. But Montaigne also, this 'mightiest of souls', overcomes pain and sickness, achieving a higher form of health on the other side of suffering. Notwithstanding his many years of pain and sickness, he begins his closing remarks of the *Essays* by declaring: 'As for me

… I love life' (III.13; T1093, S1264 [854]). Indeed, in an unpublished note from 1885, Nietzsche quotes with approval the following passage from the *Essays* (KSA 11: 40[59]): 'The soul which houses philosophy must by her own sanity make for a sound body' (I.26; T160, S180 [119]). There can be no more perfect embodiment of health, understood in the Nietzschean sense, than the philosophical example provided by the *Essays*: Montaigne's advancing illness serves only to heighten his earthly gratitude, his thought becoming ever more affirmative even as his suffering increases. As Starobinski observes, '[t]o the onslaughts of disease and the threat of imminent death Montaigne responds with praise for our bodily condition'.[55] In this way, Montaigne turns his will to life into a philosophy that eschews any kind of world-weariness or resignation. The body philosophy of 'On experience', like that of *Ecce Homo*, testifies to the following:

> A philosopher who has passed through many kinds of health … has passed through an equal number of philosophies; he simply *cannot* but translate his state every time into the most spiritual form and distance—this art of transfiguration just *is* philosophy. We philosophers are not free to separate soul from body as the common people do. … [W]e must constantly give birth to our thoughts out of our pain (GS P3).

[55] Starobinski, *Montaigne in Motion*, p. 240. Or as Brush puts it, 'the more [Montaigne] became acquainted with extreme pain … the more he embraced every aspect of his condition' (*From the Perspective of the Self*, p. 189).

CHAPTER 4: HIGHER NATURALISM

Section I: Ethical Naturalism

Philosophical anthropology

Rejecting the metaphysical oppositions of the moral absolutist, both Montaigne and Nietzsche undermine the notion of a cardinal distinction between good and evil. Seeing the human being as, fundamentally, an animal like any other—while at the same time not denying our capacity to move beyond mere animality through a second nature provided by culture—they approach moral phenomena from a determinedly naturalistic perspective, employing an experimental, historical method of philosophizing that would seek to explain conventional ethical evaluations in terms of the contingent pressures of socialization, and the more deep-rooted issue of physiological strength or weakness. For both thinkers, the advancement of an ethical naturalism is not just central to the task of translating humanity back into nature; it is also a prerequisite to any re-naturalization of values, as it is only when so-called 'evil' inclinations are revalued and understood as essential to the general economy of human life that a healthy standard of moral evaluation can be established. In order to develop such a standard, the ethical naturalist must thus take up an extra-moral position, a stance beyond good and evil.

One of the most striking features of the *Essays* is the absence of a moralistic mode of interpretation. Even if Montaigne spends a great deal of time discussing the various ethical systems of the ancients and examining a bewildering array of customs and moral ideas, he refrains from grounding his moral philosophy in any kind of ethically normative understanding of human nature. On the contrary, he observes 'conduct and motive without didacticism, without necessarily committing himself to the rights and wrongs'.[1] Montaigne's study of human action and motivation is, for the most part, descriptive rather than normative. What we find in the *Essays* is not so much the search for universal moral laws as the presentation of a kind of 'philosophical anthropology'.[2] Drawing on his intensive study of the Greek and Roman historians as well as contemporary accounts of the societies of the New World, Montaigne discusses

[1] Sayce, *The Essays of Montaigne*, p. 140.
[2] Friedrich, *Montaigne*, p. 3.

traditional philosophical themes in the light of a vast range of ethnological information. We see him at his most anthropological in 'On habit', an essay offering cross-cultural comparisons of all manner of human practices (I.23). Here as elsewhere, the underlying assumption of investigation is that the human being is part of the natural world, a species to be studied like any other. Such a point of departure, of course, necessarily involves a radical reinterpretation of religion and morality, in the sense that religious dogmas and moral theories, deprived of any supernatural foundation, come into view simply 'as creations that derive their nature from natural conditions, just as plants and animals do, turning out one way in one climate, another in a different one'.[3]

Looking back on *The Birth of Tragedy* in 1886, Nietzsche stresses that in this work 'a pessimism "beyond good and evil" announces itself … —a philosophy which desires to situate morality itself within the phenomenal world' (BT, 'SC' 5). Shortly after the publication of *The Birth of Tragedy*, in a note from 1873, he writes of the need for the 'veneration of an ethical naturalism [*Verehrung des ethischen Naturalismus*]' (KSA 7: 29[230]). More significant still, a few months later, in another unpublished note, Nietzsche describes Montaigne as a fellow 'ethical naturalist', recognising his emancipation from traditional moral theorizing, from the notion that morality has some kind of metaphysical significance (KSA 7: 30[26]). Seeking to replace the metaphysical questing for 'eternal facts' and 'absolute truths' with '*historical philosophizing*', the free spirit of Nietzsche's middle works—an ethical naturalist—calls for the detailed study, classification and comparison of all known customs and moralities, as a necessary preliminary to a period in humanity's future that Nietzsche will later designate as 'extra moral' (HAH 2, 23; BGE 32). Like that of the *Essays*, the philosophy of the free spirit, as we have seen, is characterized by a 'fearless hovering over … customs, laws and the traditional evaluation of things' (HAH 34). Furthermore, given Nietzsche's naturalistic desire to enlist ethnology in the service of philosophy, and his ambition, coming to the fore in his middle works, to explain higher human activities—morality, religion and art—in terms of all-too-human processes—self-delusion, egoism and self-cruelty—we can agree with Schacht in seeing a 'philosophical anthropology' at the centre of Nietzsche's thought. Admittedly, this is philosophical anthropology of a much more sophisticated kind than Montaigne's, based, as it is, on a post-Darwinian conception of humanity; but nonetheless, it follows

[3] Ibid., p. 110.

Montaigne's in understanding the human being 'as a creature whose existence is animate, bodily, material, social and historical'.[4]

When describing himself as a philosopher, Nietzsche seldom reaches for the term 'ethical naturalist', preferring, especially in his late works, the more provocative title of 'immoralist'. Both, however, could be used interchangeably, without significant loss of meaning, since, in essence, each signifies a deep moral scepticism, the conviction that moral commands lack any transcendent source of authority. In a late note, Nietzsche explicitly lays out the connection between ethical naturalism and immoralism: 'moralistic naturalism: [translating] the apparently emancipated, supranatural moral value back [*zurüchzuübersetzen*] to its "nature", that is, to *natural immorality*" (KSA 12: 9[86] (WP 299)).[5] Accordingly, Heitsch argues that Montaigne can also be viewed as a immoralist, understood in the Nietzschean sense, his anthropologically orientated philosophy transforming conventional moral values 'by means of an immoralistic approach'.[6] For to see conscience as the natural outgrowth of socialization and habituation, and to emphasize the natural diversity and variety of moral codes over time and place, is to question the legitimacy of any and all established values. Montaigne's naturalism, therefore, represents the other side of his immoralism, his complete freedom from tradition. What is clear is that both Montaigne and Nietzsche, through their naturalistic accounts of morality, seek to reveal the amoral actuality of *homo natura*, an actuality all too often obscured by 'vain and overly enthusiastic' moral modes of interpretation (BGE 230).

In *Human, All Too Human*, Nietzsche laments the poor contemporary state of the 'art of psychological dissection', and suggests that 'a blind faith in the goodness of human nature … in an abundance of impersonal benevolence in the world' leads current practitioners of such an art into 'error' (HAH 35, 36). By way of contrast, he looks to the 'French masters of psychological examination', who, free of any such faith, 'like skilful marksmen', hit 'the bullseye of human nature' time and again (ibid.). On the Nietzschean view, only the thoroughgoing immoralist can hope to penetrate the depths of human nature, only the ethical naturalist, determined to proceed without 'moral prejudice', is equipped to uncover the amoral roots of human action and motivation (BGE 23). Although the passage quoted above from *Human, All Too Human* singles out

[4] Schacht, *Nietzsche*, p. 268.
[5] Translation altered.
[6] Heitsch, *Practicing Reform in Montaigne's Essais*, p. 56.

La Rochefoucauld as an astute psychologist, Nietzsche very soon comes to reject the reductive egoism of La Rochefoucauld's moral philosophy (D 103). After all, a blind faith in the badness of humanity displays just as much moral prejudice as a blind faith in its goodness. As Donnellan observes, the 'exposure of … self-interest by La Rochefoucauld … becomes in Nietzsche a … more tolerant, more comprehensive' examination of human psychology.[7] But Donnellan fails to recognize the extent to which this 'more objective and descriptive approach' to moral philosophy is indebted to the ethical naturalism of Montaigne.[8] Without condemnation or cynicism, and fully accepting of the complexity of human motivation, Montaigne reveals the 'voluptuousness pleasure' in self-cruelty experienced by the highest exemplars of moral virtue (II.11; T403, S475 [309]).

Good and evil intertwined

Throughout the *Essays*, there is one moral prejudice in particular that Montaigne seeks to undermine: the idea of a fundamental opposition between good and evil. As a moral psychologist and ethical naturalist, he views such a belief—the basic assumption of the metaphysician—as contradicted not only by a glance at the variability of values evident in human history but also by an honest examination of the workings of human psychology. In Montaigne's view, once we abandon the pleasing fiction of the inherent goodness of human nature, it becomes apparent that:

> Our being is cemented together by qualities which are diseased. Ambition, jealousy, envy, vengeance, superstition and despair lodge in us with such a natural right of possession that we recognize the likeness of them in the animals too … ; for in the midst of compassion we feel deep down some bitter-sweet pricking of malicious pleasure at seeing others suffer. Even children feel it. … If anyone were to remove the seeds of such qualities in Man he would destroy the basic qualities of our lives (III.1; T767-8, S892 [599-600]).

[7] Donnellan, *Nietzsche and the French Moralists*, p. 73.
[8] Ibid.

'Evil' qualities, then, are as much a feature of human nature as those considered 'good', and are just as essential, a circumstance that unites us with other animals. Montaigne's position, however, is more radical still. For he wants to argue not merely that so-called evil passions are an ineradicable element of human life, necessary in themselves, but also that such passions are also at the root of everything we value as good. In the 'Apology' he states:

> Compassion acts as a stimulus to clemency; prudent self-preservation and self-control are awakened by our fear; and how many fair actions are awakened by ambition? And how many by arrogance? In short, not one eminent or dashing virtue can exist without some strong, unruly emotion (II.12; T550, S639 [427]).

Thus, on the Montaignean account, good and evil are not opposites, but interdependent.[9] The traditional antithesis between vice and virtue is a false one, masking a more complex reality, where 'vices have a place in the composition of virtue'.[10] Pursuing this dangerous argument one step further—which Montaigne never allows himself to do—one arrives at the unsettling judgement that much of what has formerly been condemned as evil should in fact be venerated on a par with the good.

As others commentators have noted, the extent to which Nietzsche follows what the *Essays* have to say on the mutual dependency of good and evil is striking.[11] Even more than Montaigne's, his thought is a sustained attack on the false oppositions of traditional philosophy. The opening aphorism of *Human, All Too Human* sets up a direct contrast between the mode of 'historical philosophizing' Nietzsche wishes to inaugurate and metaphysical philosophizing, which, through 'mistake[s] in reasoning', would deny that 'the most glorious colours' can be derived from 'base' (HAH 1). It is in *Beyond Good and Evil*, however, that we find his most thoroughgoing assault on '*the faith in opposite values*' (BGE 2). And even though the discussion here, in many ways, marks a significant advance on that of the *Essays*, at its core are ideas already well expressed by

[9] This is a point he makes repeatedly: 'Of the pleasures and goods that we enjoy, not one is exempt from being compounded with some evil and injury [*mal et d'incommodité*]' (II.20; T655, S764 [510]); 'When I scrupulously make my confession to myself I find that the best of the goodness in me has some vicious stain' (ibid. T656, S766 [511]).
[10] Donnellan, *Nietzsche and the French Moralists*, p. 91.
[11] Ibid., p.32; Heitsch, *Practicing Reform in Montaigne's Essais*, p. 39.

Montaigne.[12] So if Montaigne argues that 'our being is cemented together by qualities which are diseased', qualities whose 'seeds' we shouldn't dare attempt to remove, Nietzsche advises that we 'should regard even the effects of hatred, envy, covetousness, and the lust to rule as conditions of life, as factors which, fundamentally and essentially must be present in the general economy of life' (BGE 23). And if Montaigne sees virtue as intimately related to vice, even as growing out of vice, Nietzsche writes of the 'reciprocal dependence' of good and wicked drives, raising the possibility that what 'constitutes the value of … good and revered things is precisely that they are insidiously related, tied to, and involved with … wicked, seemingly opposite things' (BGE 23, 2).

Sayce makes reference to the 'far-reaching and perhaps terrifying' implications of Montaigne's moral philosophy.[13] Yet, as so often in the *Essays*, it remains up to the diligent reader to develop those implications for themselves. Writing in a less conservative time and thus in a position to be more openly subversive, Nietzsche exhibits none of Montaigne's hesitation, but at the same time recognizes the difficulty, admitting that his ideas on the interrelationship between good and evil will very likely

---

[12] One of the most prominent ways in which *Beyond Good and Evil* marks an advance on the *Essays*—indeed, an advance on the French moral philosophy tradition as a whole—is through its examination of the historical development of morality. While Nietzsche stresses the importance of the 'task of description', calling for the preparation of a 'typology of morals', he moves beyond description to the task of explanation, that is, he progresses from questions of typology to those of genealogy (BGE 186). As examined earlier, he claims that a study of the history of morality reveals two 'basic types' of morality, what he calls 'master morality' and 'slave morality', with the former being chronologically prior to the latter. In the *Genealogy*, Nietzsche provides a much more detailed account of the origin and development of these two basic types of morality, showing 'the relationship between good and evil' to be 'one of creative entwinement' (Ansell Pearson, *Nietzsche contra Rousseau*, p.18). Primarily based on an etymological investigation of ethical terms, he argues that what we now call 'good' stands for a cluster of values that was once designated 'bad', on a noble mode of evaluation, and that, from the perspective of this same mode of evaluation, what we now call 'evil' was once designated 'good' (GM 1). Montaigne, it is true, seldom enquires into the origins of moral concepts, limiting himself to two remarks, yet both are very much in line with the Nietzschean thesis. In 'On rewards for honour', he states that 'the first of the virtues to appear among men … was the one by which the stronger … made themselves master of the weaker and so acquired individual rank and reputation, from which we derive our terms honour and dignity' (II.7; T363-4, S431 [277]). This speculation seems to be confirmed somewhat by Nietzsche's etymological analysis, according to which '"refined" or "noble" in the sense of social standing is everywhere the fundamental concept from which "good" … in the sense of "superior in soul" … necessarily developed' (GM 1.4). Also, Nietzsche defines the noble or 'aristocratic value equation' as 'good=noble=powerful=beautiful' (GM 1.7). Montaigne's second genealogical remark comes in 'Of presumption'. Here, after a passage highlighting the error of separating soul from body, he offers an opinion that, on the face of it, seems to contradict his earlier comment: 'The first sign of distinction among men and the first consideration which gave some pre-eminence over others was in all likelihood superior beauty' (II.17; T623, S727 [485]). But as Schaefer points out, Montaigne actually 'harmonizes' the two accounts by way of a quote from Lucretius, which makes plain that originally value distinctions among individuals were determined on the basis of 'both strength *and* beauty', 'for beauty had great power, and strength was respected' (ibid.) (*The Political Philosophy of Montaigne*, p. 223).

[13] Sayce, *The Essays of Montaigne*, p. 141.

provoke ‘distress and aversion’ and that anyone who embraces his views completely will suffer ‘as from seasickness’ (BGE 23). Such seasickness would be a consequence of the fact that Nietzsche takes Montaigne’s argument to its ultimate conclusion: if good is dependent on evil and virtue originates in vice, and if evil must be present in the general economy of life, then evil must ‘be *further enhanced* if life is to be further enhanced [emphasis added]’ (ibid.). That evil drives and passions should be cultivated along with others is one of Nietzsche’s central convictions. Returning to this theme later in *Beyond and Evil*, he writes: ‘everything evil, terrible, tyrannical in man … serves the enhancement of the species “man” as much as its opposite does’ (BGE 44). Statements such as these elaborate on a figurative presentation of the idea that Nietzsche offers in *Zarathustra*, where the protagonist explains that ‘it is the same with the human as with the tree. The more it aspires to the height, the more strongly its roots strive earthward, downward, into the dark, the depths—into evil’ (Z 1.8).

Although Montaigne, unlike Nietzsche, never explicitly calls for the furtherance of evil passions, he seems at times to give tacit endorsement to such a view. For instance, in ‘On ancient customs’, having described a variety of Greek and Roman practices, civilized as well as barbarous, he bemoans the inferiority of his contemporaries, stating:

> Our powers are no more capable of competing with [the Greeks and Romans] in vice than in virtue, both of which derive from a vigour of mind which was incomparably greater in them than in us: the weaker the souls, the less they are able to do anything really good or really bad (I.49; T287, S334 [218]).

This is a point he deems worth repeating, offering a restatement of his position later in the *Essays*: ‘The practice of … remarkable wickedness is as much a sign of vigour and power in the soul as of error and unruliness’ (III.9; T934, S1083 [730]). What is thus clear is that Montaigne not only acknowledges the necessity of evil; he also accepts its fundamental value for human existence, going so far as to connect it with greatness of soul. Perhaps owing to such moral openness, Nietzsche describes the *Essays* as a ‘highpoint of honesty’ in matters moral, as compared with the ‘moral hypocrisy’ of German philosophy (KSA 11: 25[74]). Additionally, both thinkers are not simply content to free evil passions from bad conscience: to understand such passions as

sources of vitality and strength is very much to absolve them from shame and guilt. They even want to attribute a kind of beauty to such passions. Consequently, Nietzsche, in *Daybreak*, after observing that 'we have been permitted to seek beauty only in the morally good', claims that as 'surely as the wicked enjoy a hundred kinds of happiness of which the virtuous have no inkling, so too they possess a hundred kinds of beauty' (D 468). And Montaigne, when considering a remarkable individual like Caesar, despite acknowledging the general's cruelty, sexual addiction and reckless ambition, can recognize him as an example of a 'beautiful and richly endowed nature' (II.33; T711, S830 [554]).

Both Montaigne and Nietzsche can be understood as ethical naturalists in two distinct ways. Firstly, as already stated, they are ethical naturalists in the sense of striving to explain morality naturalistically, with the aid of ethnological analysis, historical study and psychological observation. This is the ethical naturalist as anthropologist, describing the characteristic features of morality as a natural phenomenon. But they are also ethical naturalists in the sense of their commitment to set up 'nature' or 'life' as a normative ethical ideal. This is the ethical naturalist as philosopher, addressing the more fundamental question of the creation of values, the question of what kind of moral standard should guide behaviour. To look at the development of traditional moral ideals in terms of natural human processes, whether social, cultural or physiological, is not to suggest that such ideals are themselves natural. In fact, for both thinkers, once we translate humanity back into nature and begin to glimpse the basic outlines of *homo natura*, we discover the extent to which conventional values have become inherently anti-natural. To designate both thinkers as immoralists is thus to argue only that they undermine the notion that morality could have an absolute, transcendent foundation—the claim of traditional moralists. Consequently, in *Daybreak*, Nietzsche states: 'in this book faith in morality is withdrawn—but why? *Out of morality*! … [A] "thou shalt" still speaks to us too' (D P4). Neither Montaigne nor Nietzsche deny that morality may be grounded naturalistically and empirically, on the basis of a conception of human nature—ever evolving and expanding, but never complete—developed through an experimental philosophizing.

‘Morality as Anti-Nature’

Montaigne becomes ever more convinced, as his thought progresses, that ‘Nature’ can provide the only legitimate standard of valuation: ‘As Nature has furnished us with feet to walk, so she has furnished us with the wisdom to guide us in our lives’ (III.13; T1050, S1218 [822]). But in order to heed such guidance, one must first achieve a clear understanding of one’s own nature. An honest appraisal of human nature, on Montaigne’s account, reveals the mutual dependency of good and evil passions, as well as the importance of wicked dispositions for ‘vigour and power of soul’. Such a view inevitably leads to the repudiation of a certain kind of morality, one that would seek the suppression, even eradication, of those dispositions typically labelled ‘evil’ or ‘wicked’. Firstly, given that such dispositions are at the core of what it means to be human, the attempt to eliminate evil or wicked dispositions is dangerously misguided. To attack them is, in effect, to attack one’s own nature. Secondly, even if their suppression is in some way possible, this would come at great cost to health and vitality. We are thus now in a position to fully comprehend Montaigne’s critique of the ascetic morality inherent to both Greco-Roman and Christian thought. Fundamentally anti-natural, ascetic morality, based on a mistaken picture of humanity as above and apart from the rest of nature, aims to destroy dispositions, passions and impulses that are indispensable to human life.

Accordingly, Montaigne’s opposition to an ethic of self-abasement and self-denial pervades the *Essays*. He seeks to undermine the traditional Greco-Roman idea that virtue has to do with the overcoming of natural instinct and the avoidance of bodily pleasure. The following passage, representative of countless others, captures the essence of Montaigne’s position: ‘It suffices that a man should rein in his affections and moderate them [*brider et modérer*], for it is not in his power to suppress [*emporter*] them’ (II.2; T328, S389 [250]). Not once does he advocate the repression or elimination of any emotion, passion or desire, admitting that in his own life he has taken a course contrary to exemplars of ‘excessive virtue’, whether Stoic or Christian: ‘Sound or sick I willingly let myself follow such appetites as become pressing. I grant considerable authority to my desires and predispositions’ (III.13; T1064, S1232 [832]). In this total acceptance of his own nature, Montaigne displays an attitude very much in line with the wisdom of the primitives of the New World, who exemplify a simple, natural and self-affirmative virtue (I.31; T209, S237 [156]). Some scholars, on account of Montaigne’s increasing stress on the importance of pleasure, characterize Book III of the *Essays* as

Epicurean or hedonistic. But Montaigne's willingness to follow his desires and predispositions and indulge bodily pleasures goes well beyond Epicureanism—which, in fact, he sees as no less restrictive than Stoicism (II.11; T401, S473 [307]). The hedonism of Book III does not reflect an endorsement of pleasure for pleasures sake, but is a direct and inevitable consequence of his naturalism, the affirmation of all aspects of human nature, including natural bodily instinct and desire: 'I … readily follow the slope of Nature's inclining. … [I] sedulously … welcome the pleasures of this life' (III.13; T1086-7, S1256 [849]).

Nietzsche's assault on traditional morality is many-sided and complex. Far more comprehensive than Montaigne's, his critique not only includes a genealogical investigation of conventional moral values but also involves the undermining of traditional conceptions of agency and free will, which prop up the notion of moral responsibility. Nonetheless, what ultimately guides Nietzsche's thinking is the same commitment to ethical naturalism that shapes Montaigne's. In the preface to the *Genealogy*, Nietzsche states that the crucial issue at stake with regard to conventional morality is the 'value of the "un-egoistic", the instincts of compassion, self-abnegation, self-sacrifice' (GM P5). But he then adds the following: 'It was here I saw the beginning of the end … the will turning *against* life' (ibid.). Essentially, his objection to selflessness and compassion, to the values of slave morality, reflects an antipathy to what is anti-natural and thus anti-life. Consequently, later in the *Genealogy*, he describes ascetic ideals as having grown out of '*unnatural* inclinations … the anti-instinctual, the anti-animal' (GM 2.24). This way of framing the problem of morality continues in *Twilight of the Idols*, where Nietzsche devotes an entire section to the subject of 'Morality as Anti-Nature'. And in *Ecce Homo*, he asserts that what 'horrifies' him most about Christian morality is 'the absence of nature … the absolutely horrible state of affairs where *anti-nature* itself has been given the highest honour as morality' (EH 4.7). Of course, Montaigne makes similar statements in the *Essays*, while not directly challenging Christianity: '[quoting Seneca] Nature is unconquerable; yet we have corrupted our souls with unrealities' (I.14; T59, S62 [40]); 'We have abandoned Nature and want to teach her own lessons to her' (III.12; T1026, S1188 [803]).

At the core of Nietzsche's critique of traditional morality we thus find many of the same arguments as those advanced in the *Essays*—although, admittedly, Montaigne's presentation of the naturalist position is less forceful and sustained. Most significantly, Nietzsche takes over and expands upon Montaigne's central criticism of

traditional morality: that it aims for the suppression of natural passions, desires and predispositions. In *Twilight*, he mocks the 'old moral monsters' who were unanimous in urging people 'to fight against the passions', maintaining that the attempt to '*destroy* the passions and desires' represents 'a particularly acute form of stupidity' (TI 5.1). This is a point Nietzsche returns to frequently in his late works. In *Ecce Homo* he says that the word 'immoralist' entails the negation of moral doctrines that promote the 'castration' of humanity's strongest instincts (EH 4.4). What is more, if Montaigne rejects ascetic morality out of a concern for vitality and 'power of soul', Nietzsche, convinced that even the most dangerous passions must be enhanced if life is to be enhanced, repudiates Christian morality on the basis that 'attacking the root of the passions means attacking the root of life' (TI 5.1). From the point of view of both Montaigne and Nietzsche as ethical naturalists, as advocates for the instincts of the body, for the passions and desires, '*all the methods* that have been used so far to try make humanity moral have been thoroughly *immoral*' (TI 7.5).

While the section 'Morality as Anti-Nature' in *Twilight* obviously owes a great deal to the *Essays*, Nietzsche makes no mention of Montaigne. This is typical of his late works, where he attaches more importance to stressing the radical nature of his own thought than giving credit to other philosophers where credit is due. In any case, there is evidence elsewhere in Nietzsche's writing pertaining to the significance of the *Essays* for his distinctive understanding of 'immoralism'. For instance, in *Human, All Too Human*, in an aphorism entitled 'Shakespeare as moralist', he ranks Montaigne above the dramatist in terms of an understanding of 'the passions', no doubt as a consequence of the essayist's insights on the interrelationship between good and evil passions, on the necessity of 'unruly emotion' for the performance of virtuous action (HAH 176). More significant still is the final aphorism of *Assorted Opinions and Maxims*, where Nietzsche names the four pairs of past thinkers to whom he constantly looks for guidance, one of which is Epicurus and Montaigne. What this pair share is the conviction that each individual must determine their own good for themselves, that one's own desires and pleasures have ultimate value. Namely, they share a distinctly un-Christian viewpoint. Nietzsche thus claims Epicurus as an ally in the fight against the 'corruption of the soul' brought about by the predominance of a Christian way of thinking, and he suggests that Pascal, time and again, felt the need to defend Christian thought against the danger of Montaigne (AC 58; KSA 12: 7[69]). However, even if Nietzsche sees Epicurus as an ally, he ultimately rejects Epicureanism as a system of

thought, and for the same reason that Montaigne does. Epicureanism, with its denigration of the body and its aim of reducing desire to a minimum, betrays a lingering attachment to Platonic moral asceticism: 'Only someone who is continually suffering could invent such happiness … never has voluptuousness been so modest' (GS 45).[14]

By contrast, there is nothing remotely modest about the voluptuousness of Montaigne, who insists that we 'must cling tooth and claw to the … pleasures of this life' (I.39; T241, S276 [182]). As compared with the writings of Lucretius—the main source for our knowledge of Epicureanism—the *Essays*, emphasizing the importance of the body and valorising instinct, passions and desire, represent a far broader acceptance of the human condition. Montaigne, not only acknowledging but affirming the necessity of vice, refuses to apologize or repent for any aspect of human nature in general, or for any of his own flaws in particular: 'My doings are ruled by what I am and are in harmony with how I was made. I cannot do better. … I do not find fault with myself' (III.2; T791-2, S916-7 [617-8]). All this goes some way to explain why Nietzsche never repudiates Montaigne as he does Epicurus, why he continues to seek Montaigne's counsel up to the end of his writing life. Montaigne's celebration of all sides of human nature, the evil as well as the good, prefigures the type of 'affirmative' attitude cultivated by the Nietzschean immoralist, who does 'not easily negate', but opens its 'heart' to every kind of '*approval*' (TI 5.6). Both thinkers aim to free individuals from unhealthy self-denial and self-contempt, from fear and disgust at natural inclinations.

As regards the question of how to deal effectively with the passions, Montaigne and Nietzsche both advocate moderation, and not extirpation, agreeing that such powerful sources of energy and strength must be harnessed, not destroyed. But they agree also on a further point, one that completely overturns the traditional view of ascetic morality. Counter to the notion that self-denial presents the greatest ethical challenge and makes the greatest demand on the will, Nietzsche maintains that the 'same methods—castration, eradication—are instinctively chosen by people whose wills are too weak … to exercise any restraint in a struggle against desire. … [T]he inability not to react to a stimulus, is … just another form of degeneration' (TI 5.2).

[14] Lampert draws our attention to what is perhaps the key issue for Nietzsche in his opposition to Epicurus: 'romanticism'—and this connects up with our earlier discussion on redemption. In the Nietzschean conception, at the root of romanticism is 'the impulse to seek salvation or deliverance from the world' ("Who Is Nietzsche's Epicurus?", p. 103). Lampert suggests that 'Epicurus was the opposite of a "Dionysian Pessimist" for he thought it possible and desirable to be delivered from the world'. And in this way, unlike Montaigne, 'Epicurus shared with Christianity a post-classical sensibility happy to let the world go' (ibid.).

Montaigne argues similarly, if less caustically, in the *Essays*: 'a man has more means of living an unworried life in poverty than in duly controlled abundance; behaviour duly governed by reason is more thorny than abstinence. Moderation is a virtue which makes more demands on you than suffering does' (II.33; T712-3, S832 [555-6]). And later in the *Essays*, in 'On diversion', he offers some instruction on the most appropriate method whereby moderation may be imposed on a vehement passion, by describing how he once helped a young prince who had become overwhelmed by a need for 'vengeance'. Given that 'vengeance is a sweet passion deeply ingrained in us by nature', Montaigne advised not the rooting out of this passion, but rather, leaving vengeance aside, he sought to make the prince 'savour the beauty of the opposite picture: the honour … and goodwill he would acquire from clemency' (III.4; T812-3, S940-1 [634]). That is to say, he 'diverted him toward ambition' (ibid.): the moderation of a tyrannical passion is achieved by diverting a portion of its energies towards other, more salutary passions, allowing it to be managed effectively, while at the same time avoiding the loss of overall vitality that would result from a method of castration or extirpation.

Nietzsche, in much greater detail, explains a comparable procedure in *Daybreak*, but what Montaigne calls 'diversion' is here referred to as a 'dislocation of one's quanta of energy' or 'a dislocation of forces' (D 109). One may achieve mastery over a drive or passion, Nietzsche argues, 'by deliberately subjecting oneself to a new stimulus and pleasure', thereby 'directing one's thoughts … into other channels' (ibid.). However, this insight, that passions or drives may be rechanneled or diverted, and thus transformed in their mode of expression, attains a far greater significance in Nietzsche's writing than it does in Montaigne's. In *Twilight*, he stresses—in a way Montaigne does not—how passions may be 'spiritualized, beautified, deified' (TI 5.1). Nietzsche is of the view not just that some passions may be diverted into the stream of other passions but that they may be managed or cultivated in such a way as to flow in new, more refined directions. Sensuality, for example, may be 'spiritualized' so as to issue in 'love' (ibid. 3). For Nietzsche, the psychological mechanism of spiritualization underlies the most important features of human life. Indeed, all intellectual, social and cultural developments, on the Nietzschean account, 'represent the "spiritualization" of various more rudimentary drives and impulses'.[15] From such a perspective he argues

[15] Schacht, *Nietzsche*, p. 324.

that the 'drive for knowledge can be traced back [*zurückzuführen*] to a drive to appropriate and conquer [*Überwältigungstrieb*]' (KSA 13: 14[142] (WP 423)).[16] Nietzsche's account of 'spiritualization' thus serves to make plain the 'stupidity' of the policy of castration/extirpation, which frees one from dangerous passions at the cost both of a decrease in vitality and the elimination of all possible future sublimations of those passions.

A shift from morality to 'health'

Both thinkers cast the move away from traditional ascetic virtue, from the morality of self-denial, as a return to 'health', physiological and psychological. As regards physiological health, we must, Montaigne maintains, learn from the animals. For insofar as we presumptuously attribute 'purely imaginary and fantastical' goods to ourselves, goods such as 'knowledge, rationality or pre-eminence', we thereby miss out on the 'palpable goods' that the animals boast: 'peace, repose, security, innocence, health. … Health! the fairest and finest gift that Nature can bestow' (II.12; T464, S540 [357]). What ensures the health of the animals is that they live lives in complete harmony with their own nature, guided by their most basic and necessary instincts. Given his stress throughout the *Essays* on the importance of the body and the legitimacy of bodily sensations and pleasures, what becomes clear is that Montaigne wants us to learn two main lessons from the animals: firstly, that we are subject to the 'same sort of non-rational instincts' as they are, and secondly that we, too, in order to achieve a state of physiological health, should follow 'the laws of our condition … as these manifest themselves in our physical sensations and appetites'.[17] He reinforces this second point in his discussion of the primitives of the New World, who, more virtuous than their European contemporaries, exhibit an enviable degree of physiological and psychological well-being. The virtue of the primitives is not that of extirpation or

[16] Needless to say, this idea of spiritualization or sublimation elucidates, in a more psychologically sophisticated way, the intimate relationship that Montaigne posits between good and evil drives and passions. Moreover, Nietzsche's exposition of the workings of sublimation is further enriched by his hypothesis that 'our entire instinctive life' can be understood as 'the development and ramification of *one* basic form of the will—namely, of the will to power' (BGE 36). When the theory of sublimation is combined with the doctrine of will to power we have a picture of the human psyche in which good drives can be understood as spiritualizations of more primitive drives, and all drives, whether good or evil, may be seen as manifestations of will to power at different levels of refinement. The doctrine of will to power thus helps to complete Nietzsche's view on the derivability of all 'good impulses' from 'wicked ones' (BGE 23).

[17] Schaefer, *The Political Philosophy of Montaigne*, p. 284.

castration, but a 'natural' virtue, defined in terms of 'true' and 'vigorous' living (I.31; T203, S232 [152]). Like the animals, the primitives, embracing the wisdom of nature, satisfy their essential needs without shame or guilt. And unlike the Stoic or the Christian, they accept themselves as they are, seeing nothing wicked or sinful about bodily appetites, thus giving free rein to their passions and desires. In many ways, Montaigne adopts this model of natural virtue as his own, in the sense that he neither repents for nor strives in opposition to any aspect of his nature: 'I let myself go as I came in: I combat nothing' (III.12; T1037, S1201 [811]).

As Montaigne conceives it, ethical naturalism in large part has to do with the 'freeing' of 'our "natural", corporeal instincts from the moral constraints that have been imposed upon them'.[18] In this way, the traditional moral perspective must be overturned, the traditional moral ideals transformed, being no longer directed toward the transcendence of human nature but rather toward the most vital and healthy expression of that nature. Such an overturning captures the essence of Nietzschean immoralism. If Montaigne recommends that we look to the animals and primitive cultures for instruction in our moral lives, Nietzsche states: 'Lead, as I do, the flown away virtue back to the earth … back to body and life. … May your spirit and your virtue have the sense of the earth. … [F]or the one who understands, all drives sanctify themselves' (Z 1.22.2). In this connection, it is worth noting that both thinkers lament the way in which we have devalued certain instincts and functions of the body simply *because* they are necessities, Montaigne describing this tendency as an 'error', while Nietzsche suggests that it is 'dreadful to make necessary and regularly recurring sensations into sources of inner misery' (III.13; T1094, S1266 [855]; D 76). There is no more emphasized theme in Nietzsche's later works than the dangerous antagonism between traditional moral virtue and the fundamental instincts of life. In *Ecce Homo*, for instance, he suggests that what hitherto has been deemed 'morality' has meant nothing less than humanity's 'physiological ruin', inasmuch as we have constructed moral systems 'out of contempt for the body … [and] resistance to natural instincts' (EH, 'D' 2). By contrast, displaying no fear or distrust of human nature, the Nietzschean immoralist, having overcome bad conscience, pursues a 'new life-affirming [*lebensbejahenden*]' morality, a natural, earthly virtue that develops out of a reverence for the body.[19] Invigorated by a

[18] Ibid., p. 281.
[19] Salaquarda, "Der Antichrist", p. 135.

multiplicity of drives and passions, the life of such an individual, 'physiologically' speaking, presupposes what Nietzsche calls '*great health*' (GS 382; EH, 'Z' 2).

In addition, Nietzsche repudiates moralities of self-denial not simply because he wishes to foster 'great health'. The passions and instincts, after all, as well as being indispensable to overall vitality, are also valuable sources of experience—and thus of self-knowledge. Policies of extirpation, by destroying these sources, impede true self-understanding. The methods endorsed by traditional moralists, therefore, are completely at odds with the kind of philosophizing that Nietzsche advocates: an experimental philosophizing that engages the 'great reason' of the body. Only the individual who accepts and affirms human nature, and who strives to moderate and sublimate powerful passions, is in a position to enjoy the 'dangerous privilege of living experimentally' (HAH P4). Of course, no less than Nietzsche, Montaigne's philosophy is one of experience and experiment, stressing the importance of the passions and the corporeal aspects of existence. Both Montaigne and Nietzsche, sceptical of the capacities of reason, seek to reorient the focus of philosophy toward experiential knowledge. To the extent that both thinkers deflate the role of reason in favour of non-intellectual ways of knowing, they see hostility to the passions and instincts as particularly egregious. In the *Genealogy*, when Nietzsche ridicules the ideal of 'objectivity', understood as 'disinterested contemplation', instead advancing a form of objectivity based on a 'perspectival knowing', he suggests that the '*more* feelings' we allow to come to expression, the 'more complete … our "objectivity" will be', and furthermore that 'to suspend the feelings altogether 'would amount to the 'castration of the intellect' (GM 3.12). And in the *Essays*, Montaigne repeatedly offers feeling and sensation as the primary routes to self-knowledge: 'I … allow myself to be governed by the world's general law, which I shall know sufficiently when I feel it'; 'Judgements about myself I make from true sensation not from argument' (III.13; T1050, S1217 [821]; ibid. T1074, S1243 [840]).

Both Montaigne and Nietzsche condemn traditional notions of virtue as anti-natural and anti-life, and seek to overcome moralities that strive for the suppression or repression of aspects of human nature. But what are we to make of the idea of 'nature' or 'life' as a value standard? How is a naturalistic moral standard to be determined? When one looks to the *Essays* for help, answers to such questions are not readily forthcoming, for as other commentators have noted, Montaigne never really defines

what he means by nature, never explains, exactly, how it is to serve as a guide.[20] But there can be no doubt that Montaigne understands 'Nature' in a normative sense: 'I have simply adopted raw that ancient precept which says that we cannot go wrong by following Nature' (III.12; T1036-7, S1201 [811]); 'The more simply we entrust ourselves to Nature the more wisely we do so' (III.13; T1050, S1218 [822]). What certainly can be said, however, is that Montaigne comprehends nature as something immanent to humanity, as a kind of force that is experienced most distinctly through the instincts and the passions, but which is also accessible through feeling and sensation, as well as reason. And although 'there is no system … for determining what he calls its rules, he indicates that they can be found by a return to the inner self'.[21] Montaigne believes that, through studying human nature, through assaying ourselves, it remains possible—despite having lost our immediate connection to many natural laws—to discover 'what Nature wants' (ibid. T1094, S1266 [855]). Yet he also, as we have seen, understands nature as an almost cosmic force, deserving of gratitude, if not of worship. For Montaigne, then, nature comes to represent an 'encompassing totality', embracing 'all from the outside and all from the inside'.[22]

Whereas Montaigne sets up a naturalistic meta-ethic based on a certain conception of nature, Nietzsche does so using the standard of 'life'—though he, too, often characterizes particular moral ideas as anti-natural. On the Nietzschean view, moral systems are to be judged healthy or unhealthy depending on the extent to which they advance 'life' (while for Montaigne, the health of an ethical code is related to its conformity to 'Nature'). In *Twilight*, he declares: 'I will formulate a principle. Every naturalism in morality—which is to say: every *healthy* morality—is governed by an instinct of life' (TI 5.4).[23] But how is 'life' to be construed? And, as a concept, is it any more informative than the Montaignean 'Nature'? In fact, Nietzsche offers a more robust account of how a naturalistic value standard might be constructed, because he, unlike Montaigne, attempts to define and explain the concept of 'life': '*what is life*? Here we need a new, more definitive formulation of the concept "life". My formula for

[20] Friedrich, *Montaigne*, p. 316; Levine, *Sensual Philosophy*, p. 122.
[21] Regosin, "Rusing with the Law", p. 61.
[22] Friedrich, *Montaigne*, p. 319.
[23] Comments such as this pervade Nietzsche's late works. To give two further examples, in *The Anti-Christ* he asserts that the idea of God is a '*crime against life*', and that the doctrines of Christianity are '*against life itself*' (AC 47, 62).

it is: Life is will to power' (KSA 12: 2[190] (WP 254)).[24] And as Schacht explains, this notion of life as the 'enhancement and organization of power' can be further worked out and refined 'in terms of both heightened vitality and greater cultivation and creativity'.[25]

Although an in-depth discussion of Nietzsche's complex and much contested doctrine of will to power would take us too far afield, it is uncontroversial to suggest that he understands will to power as a force operating at the very centre of human psychology. Craig Beam argues that 'when Nietzsche describes life as will to power, he is saying' that power 'is a motive which is internal to life', that 'a healthy living thing seeks to enhance its power, to disclose its strength'.[26] This psychological reading of will to power, while valid at one level of analysis, fails to do adequate justice to the Nietzschean conception, which, as Gregory Moore has shown, owes a great deal to the vitalistic tradition of 18th and 19th century German science.[27] Indeed, just as Montaigne sees a force in nature working through all living things, Nietzsche understands will to power as manifesting itself on the most basic physiological level. This is will to power conceived as 'an active, creative force inherent to nature'.[28] But even this more expansive, vitalistic interpretation does not quite come to terms with the full import of will to power. For, as is clear from his remarks in *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche intends the doctrine of will to power to have application to everything that exists, organic and non-organic (BGE 36). So here again, as in the *Essays*, we find the idea of a natural force not only immanent to all living things but also active on a cosmic level. This is not to argue, of course, that Montaigne was in any significant way an influence as regards Nietzsche's thinking on will to power, but merely to highlight the

[24] Leiter argues that the idea of 'life' is too 'vague' to provide an objective measure of valuation and so the construal of life as will to power involves 'no gain in precision' (*Nietzsche on Morality*, p. 126). As a consequence, he maintains that 'the only plausible candidate for the "life" for which things are either valuable or disvaluable must be the *lives of people*' (ibid.). More precisely, lives 'that manifest human excellence—i.e., the lives of "higher men"' (ibid.). Leiter rejects the 'strong doctrine' of will to power, 'a doctrine, to the effect, that *all life …* reflects the will to power', preferring a weaker doctrine, according to which 'will to power is posited as the best psychological explanation for a wide range of human behaviours' (ibid. pp. 138-42). But such a reading fails to address the fact that in *Zarathustra* 'will to power comes to light as the most fundamental matter in Nietzsche's thought; it names what is true of all beings and hence of the highest beings' (Lampert, *Nietzsche's Teaching*, p. 241). In *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche thus claims that 'the world viewed from inside' may be understood as 'will to power and nothing else' (BGE 36). And in the *Genealogy*, counter to the Darwinian stress on 'adaptation', he demands that we see the 'essence of life' in terms of 'will to power' (GM 2.12). Nietzsche clearly views the doctrine of will to power as grounding his naturalistic value standard.

[25] Schacht, *Nietzsche*, p. 349.

[26] Beam, *Virtue Beyond Morality*, p. 113.

[27] Moore, "Nietzsche and Evolutionary Theory".

[28] Ibid., p. 520.

comparable task that both thinkers set themselves—that of the development of a naturalistic standard of valuation—and to point out similarities in the way in which they both approached that task—Nietzsche more successfully.

Section II: Higher Naturalism

Not a return to nature but an ascent

Despite the largely favourable attitude Montaigne adopts toward primitive cultures and his refrain that humanity must strive to return to the wisdom of nature, the philosophy of the *Essays* should in no way be interpreted as the prefiguration of a kind of Rousseauian romanticism. While Rousseau may have been a reader and admirer of Montaigne, Montaigne would certainly have rejected Rousseau's contention that civilization alienates humanity from its 'natural goodness'.[29] On the contrary, the *Essays* document humanity's inherent 'cruelty', 'inhumanity', and the 'diseased' aspects that are constitutive of human nature. For Montaigne, there is simply no going back to a utopian period in humanity's history. As Levine rightly observes, 'the powerful praise of simplicity that Montaigne articulates marks the beginnings of a particularly modern kind of romanticism, and it is exactly this romantic creation of his that he ultimately rejects'.[30] In the first place, the New World cultures that Montaigne examines are neither pre-moral nor pre-social, but represent peoples that have already developed laws and religions and particular moral intuitions; and in the second, it is clear from 'On moderation', the essay preceding 'On the Cannibals', that much in the New World appals him. In the former, he describes the 'dreadful cruelty' of their religious practices, how 'all their idols are slaked with human blood' (I.30; T199, S227 [149]). Later in the *Essays*, Montaigne again takes up the theme of the horrific cruelty of these cultures, this time in 'On coaches', where he makes explicit the insufficiency of the New World as a complete ideal for his contemporaries to follow. Lamenting that the primitives were first conquered by the depraved Conquistadores, he wishes rather that they had first been discovered by 'Alexander and those ancient Greeks and Romans', who 'would have gently polished those people, clearing away any wild weeds while encouraging and strengthening the good crop that Nature had brought forth among them' (III.6; T888, S1031 [694]).

In other words, here as elsewhere in the *Essays*, Montaigne's admiration for Greco-Roman culture comes to the fore. For all he has to say on the beauty of the primitive life, the noble figures of the ancient world, whether poets, philosophers

[29] Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*, Part II.
[30] Levine, *Sensual Philosophy*, p. 90.

statesmen or generals, remain for him the highest exemplars; all of Montaigne's comments on the New World must be seen in this light. For him, 'the Indians are intended to indicate' merely 'the direction' that he wants the modern world to take 'rather than serving as a comprehensive ideal for emulation'.[31] Montaigne's ultimate ideal is thus a society that retains many of the features of Greco-Roman culture, the intellectual and philosophical sophistication, the power and vigour of mind, but is nonetheless infused by a more naturalistic understanding of humanity, promoting a kind of virtue that affirms every aspect of human nature. The 'dream' of a 'sublime encounter [*sublime rencontre*]' between the peoples of classical Greece and those of the New World prompts an uncharacteristically effusive comment from the normally sober and sceptical essayist:[32] 'What a renewal that would have been, what a restoration of the fabric of the world' (ibid. T888, S1031 [695]). What is more, this vision of a culture that combines the best of Greek culture with the great health and vitality of primitive societies offers some insight into what Nietzsche has in mind when he writes: '*Progress, in my sense*. … [A] "return to nature" … although it is not really a going-back as much as a *coming*-[*up*] [*hinaufkommen*]—[up into] a high, free, even terrible nature and naturalness' (TI 9.48).[33]

Nietzsche also frames his conception of a return to nature in direct opposition to the kind of romantic ideal that Montaigne seeks to undermine: 'Rousseau—what did *he* really want to return to? … [W]ho needed moral "dignity" in order to stand the sight of himself' (ibid.).[34] For both thinkers, the very notion that we must return to a natural 'goodness' implies the denial of the 'evil' aspects of human life that the 'moral fanatic' finds objectionable—aspects that, by contrast, the ethical naturalist accepts and affirms. And like Montaigne, Nietzsche uses the lives of primitive peoples to suggest a kind of

---

[31] Ibid.
[32] Defaux, "A propos 'Des coches' de Montaigne (III, 6)", p. 150.
[33] Translation altered.
[34] In *Human All Too Human*, Nietzsche refers to 'Rousseau's superstition': the belief 'in a miraculous primeval but as it were *buried* goodness of human nature' (HAH 463). Despite such criticism, Nietzsche also lists Rousseau as one of the eight thinkers with whom he has had to 'come to terms', and as a thinker from whom he will 'accept judgment' (AOM 408). Keith Ansell Pearson sums up the 'ambiguous' relationship between Nietzsche and Rousseau thus: 'Rousseau was without doubt a key thinker for Nietzsche, one who played an important adversarial role in his construal of modernity. … Nietzsche is close to Rousseau because like him he demands a transfiguration of human nature, a transfiguration which for both must take place in the context of a decadent civilization. What separates the two is how they construe the problem of decadence, which can be seen in their opposing conceptions of how the humanity of the future is to be cultivated. Rousseau wishes humanity to realize … its "natural goodness", while Nietzsche teaches that humanity must learn how to become more "evil"' (*Nietzsche contra Rousseau*, pp. 19-20).

physiological health that contemporary Europeans no longer possess. In the *Genealogy*, he compares 'tame', civilized, modern Europe to the 'energy', the 'boldness' and the 'freedom' of the earliest European tribal societies (GM 1.11). But of course, the higher naturalism that Nietzsche envisions very much supersedes the naturalism of the 'barbarian'. In *Twilight* he offers Napoleon as a model for the 'high, free … naturalness' that he has in mind, carrying on a theme from *Beyond Good and Evil*, where other brave commanders (Caesar and Alcibiades) are put forward as exemplars of human greatness (TI 9.44; BGE 200). In this regard also Nietzsche follows Montaigne, who, by way of a running argument that develops throughout the *Essays*, explores which of the great generals of the ancient world—Caesar, or Alexander, or Epaminondas—constitute the highest expression of human achievement.

The Goths and Vandals and figures such as Napoleon and Caesar, in their own very different ways, point towards—without fully embodying—the Nietzschean ideal of a higher naturalism. What these primitive, ancient and modern examples share is an overflowing health and vitality, representing human existence at its most joyful, triumphant and free. What distinguishes the Goth or Vandal from a Napoleon is the degree to which brute instinct has become refined. In either case, powerful passions are in evidence, but in the latter such passions have undergone the moderating processes of sublimation and spiritualization. Yet Napoleon is not Nietzsche's final word on the matter of a higher naturalism, since another step onward in refinement brings us to Goethe, 'a magnificent attempt to overcome the eighteenth century by returning to nature'; it is the figure of Goethe, more than any other, who comes closest to fulfilling the Nietzschean ideal (TI 9.49). For Nietzsche, Goethe moves 'toward … the naturalism of the Renaissance', but in so doing he also signifies a rebirth of classical Greek culture:

> [H]e did not remove himself from life, he put himself squarely in the middle of it … he took as much as he could on himself, to himself, in himself. What he wanted was *totality*; he fought against the separation of reason, sensibility, feeling, will … , he disciplined himself to wholeness (ibid.).

This very much follows the Nietzschean view of Greek culture, as expressed in 'On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life': 'the Greek conception of culture … the conception of culture as a new and improved *physis* … , culture as a unanimity of life, thought, appearance and will' (HL 10). Goethe epitomizes the kind of nobility that

Nietzsche would advance, a nobility envisioned along naturalistic lines, striving toward the realization of the full range of human potential, representing a form of cultural progress attained through the celebration and cultivation of natural human drives and capacities.

Montaigne, writing as an individual of noble birth for others of the same rank, also looks to a radical re-imagining of the meaning of nobility. Perhaps the best way to understand the return to nature that he has in mind is in terms of what Levine calls 'sophisticated simplicity': 'Montaigne wants it all. He wants the simplicity and innocence of nature [and] the freedom and self-awareness of philosophy'—a statement that could be made with equal force in relation to Nietzsche.[35] Simplicity has to do with a loyalty to instinct and passion as well as an openness to feeling and sensation; innocence with the overcoming of shame and guilt, a reorientation in our attitude toward the body—which is why ethical naturalism must be seen as a prerequisite to the ascent to a higher naturalness. But simplicity and a '*second innocence*' are not enough for either thinker (GM 2.20). Just as the masters of Nietzsche's *Genealogy* are defeated by the cleverer, more intellectually sophisticated slaves, the primitives of the *Essays* are destroyed by the more culturally and scientifically advanced Europeans. Although both thinkers place the value of instinct and passion above that of reason, this is not in any way to deny reason's importance, but merely to reject its supremacy, its tyranny over other aspects of life. Rationality, like feeling and sensation, is a capacity inherent and natural to humanity, one that must be explored and exploited as part of any naturalizing project. Furthermore, a well-developed rationality is essential to the self-knowledge and self-discipline required for the moderation and spiritualization of passion and instinct—to any culture that aspires to a 'new and improved *physis*'. Both Montaigne and Nietzsche agree that nature is 'good', but both would find 'unthinking obedience' to instinct 'unsuitable' for a being that boasts a unique ability for 'reflective self-awareness'.[36] Indeed, it is only an individual like Goethe who, refusing to separate reason, sensibility, feeling and will, could possibly 'dare to allow himself the entire experience and wealth of [naturalness]' (TI 9.49).[37]

[35] Levine, *Sensual Philosophy*, p. 85.
[36] Ibid., p. 101.
[37] Translation altered.

Custom as a second nature

But there appears to be a deep tension at the centre of Montaigne's naturalism: How can he promote cultural and intellectual sophistication at the same time as he advocates a return to nature? How are his primitivism and Philhellenism to be reconciled? Montaigne not only sets up a stark opposition between the beauty and natural virtue of the New World primitives and the corruption and artificiality of his European contemporaries, but he also recommends that we see nature both as a source of wisdom and guide to ethical behaviour. It seems he cannot tolerate any deviation from nature's ways, seeking 'her traces everywhere' (III.13; T1094, S1266 [855]). Thus, on the face of it, much of what we read in the *Essays* argues against cultural progress, Greco-Roman or otherwise. However, Montaigne's final view on human 'artifice', our capacity to develop habits and customs, is not nearly so negative or so simple. And to begin to resolve the apparent tension is his thought we must bear in mind the close relationship he describes between 'nature' and 'custom'—so close as to almost erase any clear distinction between them. For Montaigne very much complicates the meaning of nature, by fundamentally redrawing and expanding its boundaries:

> If what Nature precisely and basically requires for the preservation of our being is too little … than let us allow ourselves to take a little more: let us call "nature" the habits and endowments of each of us; let us appraise ourselves and treat ourselves by that measure. … For as far as that, it does seem we have a good excuse: custom is a second nature and no less powerful (III.10; T987, S1141-2 [772]).

In reality, there can be no sharp opposition between nature and custom, because human nature always constitutes an amalgam of first nature and second nature, a second nature formed by culture. One of Montaigne's principal insights relates to his emphasis on the way in which conventional human practices, through habituation, may 'appear to belong to our genus, to be natural' (I.23; T114, S130 [83]). As discussed earlier, he argues that the conscience and our moral intuitions, no matter how deeply felt, belong not to human nature but 'are born of custom'. What all this means is that humanity, alone among the animals, has the capacity to shape its own nature, for good or ill, and the interaction between nature and culture—insofar as culture, over time, passes into nature—represents one of the most fundamental processes in human life.

There can be little doubt that, as Williams suggests, Nietzsche enthusiastically 'take[s] over' the Montaignean conception of custom as a 'second nature'.[38] In an early note from the summer of 1872, a time in which he was reading the French moralists intensely, we find him writing that '*[i]mitation* is the medium of all culture. … The instillation of a *second nature* by way of imitation' (KSA 7: 19 [226]). And in 'On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life', published two years later, just as he is beginning to see Montaigne as one of his most important exemplars, he defines cultural progress in terms of the implantation of 'a new habit, a new instinct, a second nature' that combats our 'our inborn heritage' (HL 3). Throughout his middle works, enriching the Montaignean account, Nietzsche stresses the key role that pleasure plays in the habituation process. He explains how we prefer to engage in behaviour that can be performed with great ease and fluency, behaviour that feels natural because it 'demands no cogitation' (HAH 97) A custom may be considered second nature when it has become so ingrained as to feel 'necessary', to the extent that 'it counts as the *sole* condition under which one can feel happy' (ibid.).

There can also be little doubt, however, that Nietzsche, benefiting from a post-Darwin understanding of humanity's cultural and physiological evolution, develops the idea of a 'second nature' in radically new directions, extending its realm of application beyond that of our conscience and moral intuitions, which are primarily Montaigne's focus, to include the most deep-seated cognitive and psychological faculties.[39] He even suggests, in *Daybreak*, that dissimulation, if practiced long enough, 'at last becomes *nature*: dissimulation in the end sublimates itself, and organs and instincts are the surprising fruit of the garden of hypocrisy' (D 248). But the *Genealogy* offers Nietzsche's most far-reaching remarks on the ways in which humanity has been formed by cultural means, the 'social straitjacket': 'The enormous labour of what I have called the "morality of custom"—the special work of man on himself throughout the longest era of the human race' (GM 2.2). While Montaigne describes how our conscience arises as a second nature, Nietzsche explains that the conscience itself 'is the product of a long

[38] Williams, *Nietzsche and the French*, p. 82.

[39] John Richardson argues that Nietzsche's thought marks an advance on Darwinian accounts of our evolutionary past, with his understanding of custom as a form of 'social selection' that 'modifies' the mechanisms of natural selection: social selection, through certain customs and social practices (morality in particular), '"designs" our drives and values for different ultimate ends than the organism's reproductive success' (*Nietzsche's New Darwinism*, pp. 81-3). As a consequence, custom may be seen 'as a new mechanism for propagating or replicating behavioural dispositions, one that involves 'both a rewriting and overwriting of the dispositions shaped by natural selection' (ibid.).

history and series of transformation' (GM 2.3). As examined earlier, before the concept of conscience could arise, humanity had first to *make* the individual 'necessary, uniform, an equal among equals, regular and consequently calculable', and second humanity had to 'forge a memory for itself'—both accomplished through the 'cruellest' social practices (GM 2.1-3). And it is only because of such transformations that other, more sophisticated developments became possible, that the human being, in other words, became the 'most interesting animal', the animal 'pregnant with the future' (A 14; GM 2.16).

Forme maitresse

There remains another worry with this notion of redrawing the boundaries of nature to include dispositions instilled by custom and culture: both thinkers display as much determination to be free of habit and convention as they do to return to nature and be guided by its wisdom. We have seen how they characterize the move away from convention as a liberation, understanding habit as a tyrannical force that frustrates self-knowledge: 'the principal activity of custom is to seize us and grip us in her claws so that it is hardly in our power to come back to ourselves' (I.23; T114, S130 [83]). And as ethical naturalists and philosophical anthropologists, both advocate the overcoming of the false certainties and biases of prevailing opinion. But this tension—between custom understood as a salutary second nature and custom understood as a powerful force that alienates us from ourselves—may also be resolved, if one bears in mind that, depending on the specific characteristics of the second nature involved, both thinkers see custom as a great positive or a great negative, as a blessing or a curse. For while the return to nature they have in mind, a higher naturalism, implies a commitment to cultural progress, such progress can only be achieved through a second nature that harmonizes with and improves upon 'first nature'.

Neither Montaigne nor Nietzsche sees the individual as endlessly malleable, capable of adopting any second nature, without detrimental consequences for well-being. They agree that there are certain habits and instincts the implantation of which would prove ruinous to overall health and vitality. Precisely for this reason Nietzsche aims to reveal 'the eternal basic text of *homo natura*' (BGE 230) and Montaigne, through his project in self-study, aims to 'discover' the contours of our '*forme*

maitresse', our 'master form' (III.2; T789, S914 [615]).[40] For both thinkers, there exists an essential form or bedrock of human nature, an ineradicable first nature, a givenness in the body and physiology that must be respected. Despite their seeming endorsement of custom as a second nature, Montaigne and Nietzsche stress the absolute supremacy of the demands of our first nature. For Montaigne, nature is 'unconquerable', and 'against long nurture' will inevitably break 'forcibly out and [find] expression' (ibid.). Nietzsche, at the same time as he recommends giving 'style to one's character' by adding 'a great mass of second nature', makes clear that 'we must become the best students and discoverers of everything lawful and necessary' (GS 290, 335). Therefore, the opposition at play in both their works is not that between nature and custom but between nature and unhealthy custom: customs involving cultural practices fundamentally at odds with human nature—those practices, for instance, informed by the values of asceticism. Such are the kinds of customs and practices we must fight against, and resist their internalization as instinct. Moreover, it is by way of 'testing and experimentation' that one may determine which aspects of one's second nature should be resisted and which reinforced; 'refined self-observation' is central to this process:[41] 'Provided that he listens to himself there is no one who does not discover in himself a form entirely his own … which struggles against his education (III.2; T789, S914 [615]).[42] A view we find echoed in Nietzsche, if stated more fatalistically: 'at the bottom of us … there is … something unteachable, some granite of spiritual *fatum*, of predetermined decision' (BGE 231).

For Montaigne, by listening to ourselves and gaining insight into our *forme maitresse*, it remains possible for us not only to refine our second nature but also to surpass—without supressing or denying—our first nature. An appropriate second nature may enhance and complement what is given in our body and physiology. The Montaignean ideal of sophisticated simplicity entails a self-aware naturalness, the moderation and cultivation of natural instincts and passions through cultural means. If Montaigne sets up the ideal of a sophisticated simplicity, it is Nietzsche who explains the natural processes that would allow such a higher naturalism to be possible. In *Beyond Good and Evil*, he claims that every cultural norm, every morality, constitutes

[40] Frances Goyet suggests that what Montaigne means by 'master form' is something 'fundamental', 'innate' and 'given by nature [*donné par la nature*]' ("La Notion éthique d'habitude dans les Essais", p. 1084).
[41] Ansell Pearson, "The Incorporation of Truth", p. 242.
[42] For those who do not listen, this form may well become a 'repressed unconscious [*un inconscient refoulé*]' (Goyet, "La Notion éthique d'habitude dans les Essais", p. 1084).

'a bit of tyranny against "nature"' (BGE 188). Furthermore, and more importantly, he goes on to say the following:

> But the curious fact is that all there is or has been on earth of freedom, subtlety, boldness … and masterly sureness … has developed only owing to the "tyranny of such capricious laws"; and … the probability is by no means small that precisely this is "nature" and "natural" (ibid.).

Humanity's emergence as a social animal, because of internalization and the development of bad conscience, made possible the conditions for 'obedience'. And the capacity for 'obedience', in turn, helped humanity become the most interesting animal, the animal that could forge its own nature through the instillation of a second nature. In addition, it is essential to recognize, Nietzsche argues, that where there is '*obedience* over a long time and in a *single* direction … something always develops … for whose sake it is worthwhile to live on earth; for example, virtue, art, music … spirituality' (ibid.). That is to say, something always develops when a habituated second nature compels us to think and act within 'limited horizons', disciplining us to cultivate a range of instincts in one direction rather than another. Thus, as Parkes explains, Nietzsche 'understands … humanity's cultural achievements as resulting from self-imposed tyranny against the nature in us … yet a tyranny exercised … *by nature*, through a second nature within ourselves'.[43] Nietzsche's higher naturalism, seeking to impose a stern discipline on nature—the unanimity of reason, sensibility, feeling and will—represents a form of cultural tyranny like any other, but one that forgoes the major limitation of the kind of constraint imposed by the Stoic and Christian schemas. Nietzsche does not deny that Stoicism and Christianity have been responsible for 'educating the spirit'. This education, however, came at great cost, since to live according to their ascetic doctrines required that 'an irreplaceable amount of strength and spirit had to be crushed, stifled and ruined' (ibid.). Not so with Nietzsche's higher naturalism, a tyranny in line with the fundamental dictates of *homo natura*, a tyranny that aims to educate the spirit through the sublimation, and not the extirpation, of passions and instincts.

[43] Parkes, "Zhuangzi and Nietzsche on the Human and Nature", p. 16.

What is more, naturalism, as Nietzsche understands it, marks a move away from the kind of 'capricious', 'anti-rational' and anti-natural laws that past moral systems have used to mould human nature, and in particular a move away from the 'grandiose stupidity' of the Christian-moral interpretation (ibid.). A higher naturalism comes to dominate culture once mankind has transformed itself '*from a moral to a knowing mankind*', once mankind, that is, has taken up the '*task of assimilating knowledge* and making it instinctive' (HH 107; GS 11).[44] For Nietzsche, then, the task of translating humanity back into nature must go together with that of knowledge assimilation, since it is only as knowledge increasingly comes to take on the status of a second nature that well-chosen, rational, and natural laws can begin to be embedded as cultural norms, thereby ensuring the healthy spiritualization of the passions.[45] Grounded in a deep understanding of *homo natura*, a higher naturalism thus avoids the 'grandiose stupidity' of a moral code that would make 'mistrust of the instincts into second nature', miring humanity in a debilitating 'physiological self-contradiction' (EH 4.8; TI 9.41).[46] Nietzsche wants us to recognize the 'enormous potential' there is 'for creatively channelling our cognitive capacities back into, or onto, instinct, which would have the effect of naturalizing human beings at the same time that spiritualizing continues apace'.[47] Indeed, the *Essays* provide ample evidence for why this kind of channelling remains absolutely necessary. Montaigne fully accepts that there can be no simple return to nature, to the extent that 'nature is both the goal and part of the problem'.[48] After all, he presents 'presumption', the human tendency that he most decries, as a natural and ineradicable part of the soul, and more significant still, he argues that

---

[44] Assimilation (*Einverleibung*) 'means literally a taking into the body, and on the level of human existence it denotes a complex practice of spiritual ingestion' (Ansell Pearson, "The Incorporation of Truth', p. 235).

[45] 'Rather than blocking and vilifying our ingrained drives', Nietzsche seeks 'to use and satisfy them—while redirecting them' (Richardson, *Nietzsche's New Darwinism*, p. 122). Of course, the 'new truths' that we make instinctive in our bodies would also offer the opportunity to resolve some of 'the earlier and younger errors' that have become part of our cognitive capacities (Müller-Lauter, *Über Freiheit und Chaos*, p. 61). As a consequence, Ansell Pearson argues that 'when Nietzsche inquires after the incorporation of truth, he is in essence asking after the possibility of the overhuman' ("The Incorporation of Truth", p. 230-1). For the project of assimilating knowledge 'demands that we go beyond what is prescribed within evolution', beyond the fundamental 'errors' in perception and judgement that have proven advantageous to our species survival, thereby allowing us, in a sense, to become '"more than" human' (pp. 238-9).

[46] Physiological self-contradiction is a consequence of forms of 'social selection' that encourage the cultivation of 'dispositional commitments' which are 'hostile to the body and its drives' (Richardson, *Nietzsche's New Darwinism*, p. 92).

[47] Del Caro, *Grounding the Nietzsche Rhetoric of Earth*, p. 376.

[48] Levine, *Sensual Philosophy*, p. 122.

'metaphysical delusions originate from a natural faculty: the imagination'.[49] Guarding against our propensity for arrogance and self-delusion and the excesses of the imagination, sophisticated simplicity, like Nietzsche's higher naturalism, is a naturalism that would seek to improve on nature through the incorporation of self-knowledge.

Innocent virtue

For Montaigne, sophisticated simplicity issues in a form of virtue that he describes in terms of 'a state of innocence', a state that he himself exemplifies (II.11; T406, S478 [311]). He draws a sharp distinction between his own virtue and the Stoic model, according to which virtue represents a struggle against the desires and passions within, a struggle that must ensure the rule of reason in the soul. There is, Montaigne stresses, much to admire in this latter kind of virtue, especially when—as in the case of a Socrates or a Cato—the demanding work of self-mastery has been overcome, the need for struggle transcended. In the lives of Socrates and Cato we find virtue striding 'victoriously along, stately and at her ease', since in 'the souls of those two great men' there is 'such a perfect acquisition of the habit of virtue that it has become a matter of their complexion', their virtue constituting 'the very being of their souls' (Ibid. T402-4, S474-6 [308-10]). Yet, in Montaigne's view, such a virtue, while natural to an extent, insofar as it has become embedded as a second nature, lacks the qualities of a thoroughgoing naturalism. For the victory they both achieve amounts to no real victory at all, representing as it does an attack on the morally repugnant aspects of the soul, the conquering of their own first nature, the denial and suppression of their '*forme maitresse*'.

And it is precisely in order to avoid the unhealthy tension inherent to Stoic virtue, caused by a fundamental opposition between first and second natures—what Nietzsche calls a 'physiological self-contradiction'—that Montaigne becomes the practitioner of an 'innocent' virtue: 'Unlike Socrates, I have not corrected my natural complexion by the power of reason, and I have in no wise let my inclinations become confused by artifice' (III.12; T1037, S1201 [811]). Montaigne's virtue is more natural than Socrates, more fully expressive of his true nature. Free of guilt or shame, he feels no compulsion to 'correct' what has been given in his physiology, evinces no mistrust

[49] Ibid., p. 133.

of his most 'pressing desires' (II.11; T406, S478 [311]). In other words, 'he rejects self-correction in favour of self-affirmation'.[50] Nietzsche, just as much an opponent of Socratic or Stoic virtue, when elaborating his conception of a higher naturalism, follows the Montaignean ideal of a natural, innocent and self-expressive virtue. In *Zarathustra*, after lamenting that notions of good and evil have been 'lied' into the very 'ground' of our souls, the protagonist comments on the 'filth' of words such as 'revenge, punishment, reward and punishment', their complete inapplicability to the question of virtue, and then offers the following recommendation: 'That your virtue may be your Self and not something foreign, a skin, a covering. … That *your* Self be in the action, as the mother is in the child: let that be *your* word about virtue' (Z 2.5).

[50] Brush, *From the Perspective of the Self*, p. 237.

Section III: The Self-Enjoying Soul

Denial of autonomous reason

Montaigne's rejection of the traditional view of the soul as a unified and fixed entity, and his dissolution of the self into a multiplicity of voices, faces and personalities, clearly influences Nietzsche's thinking, anticipating many of the lines of thought that come together in the assault on 'soul atomism' that is to be found in *Beyond Good and Evil*. Moreover, neither thinker wishes to contain the soul's complexity, to restrain its diverse and contradictory impulses; they rather seek to develop the potential that multiplicity offers, endorsing an experimental philosophizing that would exploit an endless variety of perspectives in the service of self-knowledge. In addition, both Montaigne and Nietzsche are as committed to the maintenance of diversity and contradiction within the soul as they are reluctant to repress or destroy any instinct, desire or passion. As ethical naturalists, they aim to jettison traditional ascetic virtue in favour of a natural virtue directed toward psychological and physiological health. We thus have a picture of self-cultivation in which the widest possible range of contradictory impulses draws energy and sustenance from the full economy of the soul. Yet, for all that, neither thinker advocates a mere letting-go to instinct, the giving-in to desire. Rather, they conceive the 'return to nature' as an ascent to a higher, self-aware naturalism, a sophisticated naturalism that emerges out of the disciplined moderation and spiritualization of the passions. And the aim of this higher naturalism is the instillation of a second nature—by way of a culture devoted to the assimilation of knowledge—that does no violence to first nature.

But before deciding whether such a higher naturalism is at all possible, some questions remain to be answered, for instance: How is moderation to be imposed on powerful and unruly passions? Does a freedom of instinct preclude the kind of self-discipline necessary even for an 'innocent' virtue? Can harmonious self-control be achieved in a soul that embraces diversity and contradiction? Such questions become especially pressing with regard to Montaigne and Nietzsche, in view of their abandonment of the traditional ascetic route to self-mastery: reason as sovereign judge of the passions and controller of the soul. While Montaigne simply admits that he is not a follower of Socratic virtue, Nietzsche castigates Socrates for his unhealthy, anti-instinctual doctrine of '"Rationality" at any price', the way in which he makes a 'tyrant'

out of reason (EH, 'BT' 1; TI 2.9). At every turn we see both thinkers deflating the power and importance of the intellect, stressing instead the authority of sensation, feeling and instinct, the wisdom of the body. Owing to a deeper understanding of the psyche than is to be found in Greco-Roman thought, an understanding of the complexity of motivation and the significance of unconscious forces, both Montaigne and Nietzsche attempt to move beyond the notion of the human being as an essentially rational agent, and the simplistic image of the soul as an arena in which the battle between reason and the passions plays itself out. In complete opposition to Socratic and Stoic moral psychology, they would deny that there is any fundamental distinction between the apparently cool demands of reason and the more heated promptings of the passions.

Early in the *Essays*, in passages that borrow heavily from the Stoically-inclined Seneca, Montaigne appears to conceive of reason as a fully distinct and separate faculty within the soul. In 'On constancy', for example, he worries about the possibility of strong emotions 'infecting' what he calls 'the seat of reason' (I.12; T48, S49 [31]). Yet, when one looks to Book II of the *Essays*, we find him referring to 'our slight capacity for discursive reason', and describing the notion of a pure 'rationality' as 'imaginary and fantastical' (II.8; T366, S434 [279]; II.12; T464, S540 [357]). For Montaigne, reason is neither autonomous nor impartial, but passionate to the core; the passions dominate the soul, twisting the intellect this way and that: 'What varied thoughts and reasons, what conflicting notions, are presented to us by our various passions' (ibid. T551, S640 [427]). On this view, reason, far from being sovereign ruler over the soul, is slave to the passions. Montaigne's position, however, is more revolutionary still:

> By *reason* I always mean that appearance of rationality which each of us constructs for himself—the kind of reason which can characteristically have a thousand contrary reactions. … A thousand chance emotions, unbidden, are in turmoil within me; sometimes a melancholic humour gets hold of me; at others a choleric one; sometimes grief or joy dominate me, for reasons of their own (ibid. T548, S636-7 [425]).

To the extent that Montaigne sees reason as playing an important but instrumental role in the psyche, moved to judgement as a consequence of unknown forces, as something individual and subjective, rather than universal and objective, the *Essays* prefigure much of what Nietzsche has to say on the nature of the intellect, and in particular what

he has to say in two especially rich sections from *Daybreak*, 109 and 119. In the former, he suggests that in the 'entire procedure' of self-mastery 'our intellect' is only ever 'the blind instrument of *another drive* which is a *rival* of the drive whose vehemence is tormenting us'; while in the latter he seeks to explain the kind of variability in our reasoning that Montaigne observes, by probing beneath the incitements of 'chance emotions': 'today's prompter of the reasoning faculty was different from yesterday's—a different *drive* wanted to gratify itself, to be active, to exercise itself, to refresh itself, to discharge itself'. More significant still, Nietzsche's more penetrating understanding of the unconscious doesn't simply allow him to illuminate the workings of the intellect in a way the *Essays* cannot; it also leads him to effect a more radical subversion of autonomous reason than Montaigne, who, even if he sees the intellect as a servant of the passions, still believes reason to be in some way opposed to them. But Nietzsche, in a total repudiation of Greco-Roman thought, argues that there can be no real and fundamental conflict between the rational and appetitive sides of the soul, since the intellect may be properly viewed as merely '*a certain behaviour of the drives toward each other*' (GS 333). The intellect, that is to say, 'is not something separate from or other than the drives, but rather a certain *configuration* of them'.[51]

Self-mastery

Montaigne's rejection of Socratic rationalism and ascetic virtue has led to some disagreement as to what alternative conception of self-mastery, if any, he would want to advance. Philip Hallie, for instance, based on a particular reading of 'Of cruelty', rightly argues that Montaigne aims to overturn the 'Inward Government Theory', the theory of ethics which would understand virtue as the control of reason over the passions. What the *Essays* actually promote, he goes on to claim, is an other-orientated ethic, an ethic that, renouncing the goal of self-mastery altogether, moves away from a self-centred preoccupation with the ordering of one's soul.[52] Taking the *Essays* as a whole, however, there is scant textual support for this kind of reading; indeed, the evidence to the contrary is overwhelming. After all, Montaigne frames his entire writing project in terms of an art of living, a care of the self, apologizing throughout the *Essays* for his

[51] Parkes, *Composing the Soul*, p. 353.
[52] Hallie, "The Ethics of Montaigne's 'De la cruauté'". Agreeing with Hallie, Schaeffer even goes so far as to suggest that Montaigne seeks to supplant the 'Inward Government Theory' approach with a 'social utility … criterion of moral evaluation' (*The Political Philosophy of Montaigne*, p. 245).

exclusively self-centred focus. Everything he reads or writes has value for him only insofar as it serves to enhance the virtue of his own character: 'For many years now the target of my thoughts has been myself alone; I examine nothing, I study nothing, but me; and if I do study anything else, it is to apply it at once to myself, or more correctly, within myself' (II.6; T358, S424 [273]). Furthermore, when comparing and ranking his exemplars, he does so by considering their evident self-discipline and self-control, the way in which they manage the most difficult passions and emotions. On this basis, Montaigne places the characters of Caesar and Alexander beneath that of Epaminondas, the Theban general, whose wise and 'well-ordered soul' ensured an 'ever abundant virtue' (II.36; T734-5, S855-6 [573]). Moreover, when contrasting his own virtue with that of Socrates, he develops the opposition not by outlining an other-orientated ethic that looks to the social utility of our actions, but rather by stressing a healthier, more natural attitude that one could adopt toward one's own soul.[53]

In line with Hallie and Schaeffer, Hartle maintains that 'in Montaigne's own goodness there is no element of struggle … the virtues and vices are re-ordered in accordance with a model of moral action in which there is no mastery'.[54] Such a view seems poorly placed to capture the type of 'innocent' virtue Montaigne has in mind, not least because it fails to take account of explicit statements that he makes to the contrary. The capacity to order and control the passions and impose self-constraint remains central to his understanding of virtue, despite his refusal of a particular form of self-mastery: 'True freedom is to have power over oneself to do *anything* with oneself' (III.12; T1022, S1184 [800]). And this comment, coming in the penultimate easy of the volume, merely follows on from the near impossible ideal expressed by the essayist a few essays earlier: 'I want to be in every way a master of myself' (III.5; T818, S948 [639]). Admittedly, the theme of self-mastery is not a dominant one in the *Essays*. Yet as Frame observes, throughout the *Essays*, amid the 'disclaimers of resistance we find evidence of control'.[55] What is more, this is self-control of a quite extraordinary kind, demanding constant self-awareness and the most rigorous self-discipline: 'I do control

[53] Montaigne, like Nietzsche, may be understood as a 'moral perfectionist': the *Essays* exemplify the conviction that 'one's primary, overriding—and perhaps sole—ethical "obligation" is to attend to the perfection of one's ownmost self (Conway, *Nietzsche and the Political*, p. 54). Any "obligations that one might choose to observe to others are strictly derivative of, and secondary to, the imperative to perfect oneself' (ibid.). Indeed, for Brobjer, both thinkers promote a form of ethics that could be best described as 'an ethics of character' (*Nietzsche's Ethics of Character*, p. 42).
[54] Hartle, "The Transformation of Virtue in Montaigne's *Essays*", p. 11.
[55] Frame, *Montaigne*, p. 262.

my vices, preventing them from being contaminated by others. … I prune … and train them' (II.11; T407-8, S479-80 [312]); 'There is hardly an emotion in me that sneaks away and … is not governed by the consent of almost all my parts' (III.2; T790, S915 [616]); 'I stop the first movements of my emotions. … I can feel in time the tiny breezes which come … as forerunners of gales' (III.10; T994-5, S1150 [778]); 'my soul … is ever probing and feeling herself. … Each onslaught against me I confront and oppose equipped in full amour' (III.6; T878, S1019 [686]). But even if one puts aside such comments, and even if one dismisses Montaigne's express wish to be the master of himself as an isolated remark, one is still left with the reality that his way of life, given the contradiction and multiplicity he discovers within himself, presupposes a high level of internal struggle, the need to order and moderate conflicting passions, and thus implies a degree of self-mastery that would at the very least allow for the subjective multiplicity of the soul to be harnessed in a unified direction.

Montaigne's goal, therefore, is not to abandon the Stoic ideal of self-mastery outright, but to substantially revise it, reconceiving the proper ordering of the soul along more naturalistic lines, reflecting an understanding of the multiplicity of the self and an appreciation of the value of passion and instinct. To reject a reason-centred mastery is not to reject mastery *in toto*. But how, exactly, is self-mastery to be construed in the absence of a fixed, stable and unchanging self, and without the dominance of reason within the soul? In order to answer this question, we should look to Nietzsche, who, based on a similar conception of the soul and a similar opposition to the 'correction' of human nature by reason, offers a richer account of the kind of self-mastery that Montaigne has in mind. Indeed, not only do both thinkers begin at a comparable starting point—in terms of a naturalistic understanding of the self—but they also arrive at a shared ideal: a form of mastery that manifests in an instinctual, effortless and relaxed virtue. And both seek to underplay the difficult work of self-analysis, self-experimentation and self-discipline that must precede the attainment of such a virtue, through a rhetoric of ease and nonchalance.

Parkes offers a compelling account of the Nietzschean understanding of self-mastery, which could be described in terms of a 'two-phase relationship' among the drives of the soul.[56] The first phase involves the imposition of a protracted constraint on the conflicting and competing aspects of the self, not by way of reason, as in the Greco-

[56] Parkes, *Composing the Soul*, p. 357.

Roman model, but through the dominance of a particular drive or group of drives. Nietzsche is far more open than Montaigne about the need for rigorous self-discipline, if not self-tyranny: 'Look for the highest type … where the highest resistance is constantly being overcome: five paces away from tyranny … if you understand "tyrant" to mean the merciless and terrible instincts that provoke the maximal amount of authority and discipline against themselves' (TI 9.38). Nevertheless, for Nietzsche, this kind of self-discipline, in itself, is not sufficient to bring about the most ideal ordering of the soul. For he suggests that, once self-control has moved beyond the stage of internal struggle to a state of perfect habituation, self-tyranny may then, for a certain period of time, be 'relaxed in such a way that one can enjoy spontaneous existence'.[57] In this second phase, Nietzsche, given his ethical naturalism, his conviction that 'evil' drives are essential for health and vitality, is concerned to 'retain as many powerful energies as possible within the … soul', thus averting the worst excesses of the extirpation/castration approach of traditional virtue: [58]

> *Overcoming of the affects*?—No, if what is implied is their weakening and extirpation. But taking them into service: which may also mean subjecting them to protracted tyranny. … At last they are confidently granted [a trusting] freedom again: they love us as good servants and go voluntarily wherever our best interests lie (KSA 12: 1[122] (WP 384)).[59]

There are clear affinities between this two-phase model and the ideal of self-cultivation that Montaigne portrays in the *Essays*.[60] Like Nietzsche, he, too, strives for mastery

---

[57] Parkes, *Composing the Soul*, p. 355.
[58] Ibid., p. 357.
[59] Translation altered.
[60] Where Nietzsche and Montaigne disagree is on the question of self-tyranny. While Montaigne certainly advocates a high level of self-control and self-discipline, a constant vigilance regarding one's passions and emotions, he would find the notion of a 'maximal amount of authority and discipline' against oneself as too excessive. For Nietzsche, on the other hand, 'a form of tyranny in which … a particular complex of drives … holds ruthless sway over the other members of the psychical community may be a most productive arrangement', owing to the tremendous power and energy that such an arrangement can help to accumulate (Parkes, *Composing the Soul*, p. 351). In the section from *Twilight of the Idols* quoted above, he goes on to offer Julius Caesar as 'the most magnificent type', the greatest exponent of self-tyranny (TI 9.38). But Montaigne—even if his description of the organizational characteristics of the general's soul is in remarkable agreement with Nietzsche's—explicitly rejects Caesar as a model of psychic health, and he does so precisely because of Caesar's tyrannical drive for ambition: 'His passionate ambition ruled so sovereignly over all other passions and possessed his soul with such authority, that, wherever it wanted to go, it carried him there. … [A]ll [his other] beautiful dispositions were stifled and corrupted. … [T]hat one

over the contradictory impulses within, while at the same time also denying that rigid self-control represents the pinnacle of the virtuous existence: 'To see the exertions that Seneca imposed upon himself … to see him sweat and grunt in order to stiffen and reassure himself during his long struggles on his pedestal' (III.12; T1016-7, S1177 [795]). If Nietzsche looks to a life of freedom and spontaneity, Montaigne characterizes the 'most beautiful' soul as that which exhibits the greatest adaptability and 'flexibility' (III.3; T796, S922 [621]). In contrast to the unbending virtue of Seneca, the virtue of Montaigne involves a suppleness of movement and action, the capacity to change and adapt to circumstance, which can only come about from a relaxation of self-control, all internal resistance overcome.[61] Throughout the *Essays*, so determined is he to emphasize the limitations of ascetic virtue, Montaigne devotes his attention entirely to highlighting the second phase of self-mastery, the ease and suppleness that follow self-discipline, the phase that the Stoic practitioner never reaches. Offering his own life as an example, he forces the point home through the following kind of rhetoric—choosing not to mention the elements of self-control that his own art of living shares with the traditional conception: 'Assays of myself have not revealed the presence in my soul of any firmness in resisting the passions. … I do not know how to sustain inner conflicts and debates. … Was it due to some … accident of birth?' (II.11; T406, S478 [311]) This Montaignean trope represents one more aspect of the *Essays* that finds its way into Nietzsche's *Ecce Homo*: 'I have no memory of ever having made an effort,—you will not detect any trace of *struggle* in my life, I am the opposite of a heroic nature … there is not a ripple of longing' (EH 2.9).

---

vice alone … undid the most beautiful and most richly endowed soul that ever was' (II.33; T708-10, S828-30 [552-4]).

[61] It is conspicuous that, as regards the qualities of flexibility and adaptability, Montaigne puts forward Alcibiades, less tyrannized by ambition than Caesar, as the model we have most to learn from: 'I have often noted with great astonishment the extraordinary character of Alcibiades who, without impairing his health, could so readily adapt to diverse manners' (I.26; T166-7, S187 [124]). Conspicuous because Nietzsche places Alcibiades alongside Caesar as an exemplar who displays 'a real mastery and subtlety in … self-control' (BGE 200). So even if Montaigne may not see self-tyranny as a necessary condition of mastery, he does see freedom and flexibility as its ultimate goal.

Becoming what you are

Yet there are other, significant parallels between the Montaignean and Nietzschean accounts of self-mastery, especially when one looks to the importance they both attach to the idea of self-creation. For both thinkers, the 'self' that does the controlling and tyrannizing is not something fixed and given, but represents an ever-evolving, self-formed or self-fashioned complex of emotions, instincts and passions. In one of his opening essays, Montaigne admits that 'where I seek myself I cannot find myself' (I.10; T34, S41 [26-7]). And he never succeeds, strictly speaking, in finding himself, as this later passage makes plain:

> Since I was modelling this portrait on myself, it was so often necessary to prepare myself and to pose so as to draw out the detail that the original has acquired more definition *and has to some extent shaped itself*. … I have not made my book any more than my book has made me' [emphasis added] (II.18; T647-8, S755 [504]).

When completing the *Essays*, therefore, through self-study and self-experimentation, Montaigne does not so much discover a self as create a self. And it is his writing project, the mission to make himself known, that enables Montaigne to impose a measure of order on the multiplicity he finds within, to guide the opposed tendencies of his soul in a unified direction.[62]

Whereas Montaigne speaks about the self in terms of self-shaping and self-fashioning, Nietzsche claims that '[a]ctive, successful natures *act* … as if there hovered before them the commandment … thou shalt *become* a self' (AOM 366). Self-creation is central to the process of becoming a self, what Nietzsche most often refers to as 'becoming what you are'. In *The Gay Science*, he characterizes 'human beings' who become what they are as those 'who are new, unique, incomparable, who give themselves laws, who create themselves' (GS 335). In fact, such is the importance of this ideal for Nietzsche, he sees fit to have it as the subtitle of *Ecce Homo* (*Ecce Homo*: *How to Become What you Are*). What is more, *Ecce Homo* offers insight into the crucial relationship between becoming a self and one's life 'task' (EH 2.2):

[62] Zahi Anbra Zalloua argues that Montaigne does not intend the *Essays* to reflect 'an already formed subject'; rather, he sees 'his ethical self' as taking shape 'through the very process of writing' (*Montaigne and the Ethics of Skepticism*, p. 1).

> The whole surface of consciousness … has to be kept free from all of the great imperatives. … In the meantime, the organizing 'idea' keeps growing deep inside,—it starts commanding … one by one, it develops all the *servile* faculties before giving any clue as to the domineering task, the 'goal', the 'purpose', the 'meaning' (EH 2.9).

Thus, in the Nietzschean conception, the ideal ordering of the soul is one in which 'one's task in life, as constituted by a particular complex of drives', rules over the contradictory aspects of the soul.[63] One's 'domineering task' functions as a powerful disciplining and ordering force in the psyche, around with which the self—to use the Montaignean phrase—shapes itself.[64] And while Montaigne's task emerges as the overcoming of Greco-Roman philosophy and Christian theology through a study of himself, Nietzsche's develops into the self-overcoming of the entire Western philosophical and religious traditions by way of a 'revaluation of values' (ibid.).

As Williams notes, all the major elements of Nietzsche's conception of 'becoming what you are' are anticipated in the *Essays*, not only a recognition of the relationship between self-creation and one's 'task' but also the understanding that self-creation is essentially a matter of self-legislation.[65] That one must live by one's own laws and judge according to standards one sets for oneself is a view pervading the writing of both Montaigne and Nietzsche. In 'On repenting', Montaigne insists that 'we must establish an inner model to serve as touchstone of our actions', and then offers himself as an example: 'I have my own laws and law-court to pass judgement on me and I appeal to them rather than elsewhere' (III.2; T785, S911 [613]). Like so much of Montaigne's thought—on cruelty, on morality as custom, on the instrumental nature of reason—this idea is also present in *Daybreak*, where Nietzsche considers a possible future in which 'lawgiving' would be 'founded on the idea "I submit only to the law which I myself have given"' (D 187). Rejecting the notion of an absolute good or the existence of universal moral norms, both thinkers—ethical naturalists rather than moral fanatics—promote a way of life in which each individual's highest ethical duty is to themselves, legislating for themselves in such a way as to ensure the realization of their

[63] Parkes, *Composing the Soul*, p. 351.
[64] 'The "higher type" … fashions the constellation of drives that comprise the self into a coherent unity in which all drives and instincts receive expression, not in a wanton or anarchic manner, but in a way that is answerable to an organizing principle, a master drive, the "law of one's own being"' (Came, "The Themes of Affirmation in *The Birth of Tragedy* and Beyond", p. 219).
[65] Williams, *Nietzsche and the French*, p. 107.

own true nature, self-given laws issuing in self-expressive virtue. Montaigne thus boasts that he does not 'suffer from the common failing of judging another individual by himself', but can instead 'conceive and believe that there are thousands of different ways of living' (I.37; T225, S257 [169]). And Nietzsche, contra Kant, argues that 'everyone should invent his *own* virtues, his *own* categorical imperative' (AC 11). In this way, they both make the same urgent demand on their readers: 'Can you give yourself your own evil and your own good, and hang your will over yourself as a law?' (Z 1.17)

Individuals create themselves to the extent that they act in accordance with laws of their own making, shaping their lives in line with internal need rather than external constraint. Becoming what you are, therefore, has little to do with an arbitrary constructing of the self based on some kind of aesthetic criteria, but rather involves a form of self-fashioning that presupposes the deepest self-knowledge.[66] For Montaigne, self-creation entails 'listening' to oneself, so as to discover one's true 'form' (III.2; T789, S914 [615]), and then submitting to its dictates: '[quoting Cicero] We must so live as not to struggle against Nature in general; having safeguarded such things, we should follow our own nature' (III.9; T967, S1118 [756]). Nietzsche, on the other hand, describes how there 'are spirits all around us … but we refuse to listen to these spirit-

[66] I follow Ur and Conant in seeing the 'aestheticist' interpretation of Nietzsche as very much mistaken. On this view, Nietzschean self-fashioning constitutes a primarily aesthetic or stylistic affair. For Nehamas, who offers the most influential reading in this regard, the *Essays* also exemplify this aestheticist approach. He argues that, for philosophers like Montaigne and Nietzsche, self-cultivation primarily involves the creation of a new and unique literary persona, their respective arts of living having less to do with self-mastery and the development of character than with the adoption of 'a particular style' (*The Art of Living*, p. 143; see also *Life as Literature*). But this way of construing their philosophies completely obscures the extent to which both understand the thought of the philosopher as grounded in the body and literary style as the expression of physiology. What is more, as regards the notion of the philosopher as literary persona, it would be difficult to set out a conception of the philosophical life more at odds with the ideal Nietzsche explicitly offers: the example of the philosopher 'must be supplied by his outward life *and not merely in his books*—in the way, that is, in which the philosophers of Greece taught, through their bearing … rather than by what they said, *let alone what they wrote* [emphasis added]' (SE 3). According to this model, to which both Nietzsche and Montaigne subscribe, 'the central purpose of philosophy is to live well … [and] the value of philosophical writing lies in the manner of life it enables the philosopher to lead; without this life it is valueless'; in other words, philosophical writing is 'an instrument through which the self can work upon and transform itself' (Ure, *Nietzsche's Therapy*, p. 31). Of course, this is not to deny that the self-fashioning as practiced by Nietzsche and Montaigne includes a marked aesthetic component. If Nietzsche talks of 'an artistic plan' and 'a single taste' that rules and shapes the self (GS 290), Montaigne consistently values qualities of character in aesthetic terms: not only did Caesar have a 'beautiful' nature, but in the character of Alexander we may witness 'beauty shimmering with … lustre' (I, 24; T128, S145 [94]). However, in their respective accounts of self-fashioning, we may understand both thinkers as offering an ethical model with an 'aesthetic dimension', rather than—as Nehamas would have it—an aesthetic model with an ethical dimension (Conant, "Nietzsche's Perfectionism", p. 220).

voices (SE 5), yet through psychological dissection and honest self-analysis we may uncover 'the fundamental law of [our] own true self' (SE 1). On his view, only higher individuals—a Goethe or a Montaigne—those practiced in severe self-discipline, are in a position to grant obedience to such a law. Self-creation in the Nietzschean sense is a possibility only for 'those who experience their most exquisite pleasure … in being bound by but also perfected under their own law' (GS 290).[67]

For both thinkers, the details of one's task emerge slowly and for the most part unconsciously; one discovers one's true form or fundamental law only after long effort: '[I] found my way … the way to "myself", to *my* task. That concealed and imperious something' (HAH II P4). Furthermore, given that self-creation has to do with self-legislation, and that self-legislation involves obeying what is given in one's nature, both Montaigne and Nietzsche see self-creation in terms of a kind of fatedness. Montaigne—who continually invokes the notion of fate or fortune to account for the 'chance' character of our decisions and actions—having described how he legislates according to his 'own laws', goes on, a few passages later, to state the following:

> My doings are ruled by *what I am* and in harmony with how I was made. I do not find fault with myself. … I blame not what I did but my fortune. … I am always comforted by the thought that *they had to happen that way* [emphasis added] (III.2; T791-3, S916-18 [617-9]).

Consequently, on the Montaignean account, self-shaping must go hand in hand with an acceptance of fate, but this is fate conceived naturalistically, not metaphysically, fate,

---

[67] Although arguing for self-legislation, neither thinker would endorse value relativism. To deny that there is such a thing as absolute goodness and to reject the existence of a universal moral standard is not to give up on the idea of objectively true or false value statements. Montaigne and Nietzsche both endorse value relationalism, not value relativism. According to a relational theory of value, particular laws or values can be good or bad for different types of people, depending on their specific natures, on certain natural facts about them—their abilities, desires, physiological predispositions. Thus we find Montaigne making statements such as the following: 'I can easily believe that others have qualities quite distinct from my own. … [E]ach of us should be judged apart' (I.37; T225, S257 [169]); 'Men differ in tastes and fortitude: they must each be brought, by differing routes, to what is good for them, each according to his nature' (III.12; T1029, S1191 [805]). And Nietzsche argues that, regarding morality, 'the question is always who *he* is, and who the *other* person is. In a person, for example, who is called and made to command, denial and modest self-effacement would not be a virtue but the waste of a virtue' (BGE 221). Peter Railton offers a cogent analysis of Nietzsche's relational theory of value, which he describes as 'a theory of how to live well', one that 'treats value as part of the fabric of lived existence, something we directly experience and learn by doing' ("Nietzsche's Normative Theory? The Art and Skill of Living Well", pp. 47-8).

that is, as manifested in one's bodily condition, in the irrefutable directives of one's own, unique psycho-physiology. Just such a naturalized fatalism suffuses Nietzsche's late works, *Ecce Homo* in particular. If Montaigne, not faulting himself, finds comfort in the thought that his life had to unfold as it did, Nietzsche asks us to accept ourselves 'as a fate', demanding that we refrain from wanting to change anything about ourselves (EH 1.6). And as regards his 'domineering task', he reveals that he 'had absolutely no idea what was growing inside', until one day all his 'capabilities suddenly *leapt out*' (EH 2.9). Nietzsche intends the ideal of 'becoming what you are' to encapsulate the kind of self-creation as fatalism that the *Essays* would seek to represent: self-creation that is rooted in the great reason of the body, that develops the potential latent in the 'chance' workings of our unconscious drives, that respects the particular laws of our own being as well as the more general laws of *homo natura*. Self-creation so understood is therefore 'by no means independent or separable from one's native talents, one's "instincts", one's environment'; rather, 'self-making ("becoming") already embraces fatalism ("who you are")'.[68]

Self-love

We recall that what first draws Nietzsche's attention to the *Essays* is Montaigne's remarkable 'cheerfulness', his capacity to celebrate existence, to be completely 'at home in the world' (SE 3). As he moves away from Schopenhauer's 'world-denying' philosophy, Nietzsche looks to Montaigne as a new exemplar, an exemplar more in tune with the world-affirming attitude he would want to advance. And throughout Nietzsche's middle works, in the experimental philosophizing of the free spirit, we may see the unmistakeable influence of the *Essays*, in matters both philosophical and stylistic. In his late works, Nietzsche continues to take up Montaigne's ideas—further radicalizing and naturalizing them. Yet, notwithstanding the *Essays*' resolute this-worldliness, it is, more than anything else, Montaigne's affirmation of existence that helps to sustain Nietzsche's admiration to the end of his writing life. For not only does Montaigne, like Nietzsche, endeavour to become what he is, to obey the laws of his own nature, but he also, prefiguring the 'higher' individual of Nietzsche's mature works, seeks to affirm what he is through a love of a fate and a celebration of the moment.

[68] Solomon, "Nietzsche's Fatalism", p. 420.

For both thinkers, the highest and healthiest affirmation of life begins in an unconditional love of the self. Through the conception of a natural, self-expressive virtue—a virtue based on an appreciation of the reciprocal dependence of good and evil drives, on a policy of diversion or spiritualization rather than extirpation—Montaigne and Nietzsche aim to replace traditional ascetic virtue, the virtue of self-denial and self-abasement, with an ethic of self-love, freeing individuals from shame, from disgust at human nature. Shunning Christian opposition to self-love, with its emphasis on guilt and original sin, Montaigne wants us to recognize the 'true degree of love that each' individual owes to themselves, what he calls 'a healthy, measured love [*une amitié salutaire et réglée*]', a love that, he would suggest, 'represents the pinnacle of human happiness and of joy' (III.10; T984, S1138 [769]). Such self-love moves us well beyond the care of the soul or self-cultivation prescribed by Greco-Roman thought, entailing no tyranny of reason, no suppression of passion, no denial of our instinctual first nature. Embracing all aspects of the self, the kind of self-love that Montaigne has in mind is also at the very centre of Nietzsche's mature thought, forming a key plank in the teaching of Zarathustra: 'One must learn to love oneself … with a wholesome and healthy love: so that one can tolerate oneself and not have to roam about' (Z 3.11.2).

This wholesome self-love has little to do with presumptuous self-regard, an unthinking narcissism, but rather implies rigorous self-scrutiny, 'for it is love alone that can bestow on the soul not only a clear, discriminating … view of itself, but also the desire to look beyond itself and to seek with all its might for a higher self as yet concealed from it' (SE 6). Montaigne, who studies himself 'more than any other subject', and rejecting 'false' self-love, draws a distinction between self-love and self-esteem, the latter reflecting a tendency to give in to complacent pride and vanity (III.13; 1050, S1217 [821]; III.10; T984, S1138 [769]). Hence, at the same time as he endorses self-love, we also find him saying that 'it would be hard for anyone to esteem himself less than I do' (II.17; T618, S722 [481]). Nietzsche characterizes such an attitude as that of 'being ashamed of oneself without any accompanying feeling of distress' (SE 6). In this way, the form of self-love that both Montaigne and Nietzsche advocate is one that includes a penetrating understanding of one's own limitations, that accepts the need to discipline, master and shape the self in a way that would allow one to become what one is. In the Montaignean conception, such a stance toward the self is akin to a 'loving-friendship' (III.10; T984, S1138 [769]).

Both Montaigne and Nietzsche view healthy self-love as a necessary corrective to the ascetic ideals that have come to dominate Western culture, ideals that foster self-mistrust and self-hatred. For Montaigne, '[w]e show our ingenuity only by ill-treating ourselves', while Nietzsche, through the mouth of Zarathustra, declares: 'Shame, shame, shame—that is the history of the human. … Ever since there have been human beings, they have enjoyed themselves too little: that alone, my brothers, is our original sin!' (III.5; T857, S994 [670]; Z 2.3) From neither thinker, though they sometimes offer glimpses of humorous self-mockery, do we ever see expressions of guilt, remorse, or regret, and certainly no admissions of self-contempt. Montaigne, in particular, appears to delight in his own existence: 'I am concerned with no one but me. … I watch myself, savour myself [*je me goûte*]. … I turn round and round in myself' (II.17; T641, S747 [499]). Defiantly egoistic and defiantly unchristian, not once does he praise the value of selflessness; in fact, he explicitly advises against it: 'we must … give ourselves to ourselves alone' (III.10; T980, S1134 [767]). And perhaps a look to Nietzsche may give us some insight into this Montaignean opposition to selflessness. Perhaps Montaigne suspects, as Nietzsche does, that 'only the will to mistreat the self supplies the condition for the *value* of the un-egoistic', that behind the ideal of altruism, an ideal intimately related to bad conscience, there lurks an unhealthy resistance to natural instinct (GM 2.18). For this reason, Nietzsche argues that the 'noble soul' must aspire not to selflessness, but 'self reverence', argues, furthermore, that such a soul must possess a 'fundamental certainty … about itself', thereby allowing no basis for self-mistrust or self-hatred to develop (BGE 287).[69]

Love of fate

Whereas Montaigne views proper self-love as constituting 'the pinnacle' of human happiness and of joy, Nietzsche offers the ideal of the 'self-enjoying soul', the 'powerful soul' that exhibits a 'wholesome, healthy, selfishness' (Z 3.10.2). Moreover, given that, for both thinkers, the 'self' of this self-enjoying soul represents something that is fashioned in accordance with laws given in one's nature, represents, that is to

[69] On the Nietzschean account, 'one's being a certain type of human being … explains one's ability to be well disposed to oneself to a great degree' (Janaway, "Nietzsche on Morality, Drives and Human Greatness", p. 192). Only those who are 'internally constituted in the right way will be … capable of the ideal attitude of self-affirmation' (ibid.). In other words, he capacity for self-affirmation is 'explained by one's having a constitution with a strong, full, conflicting but unified set of dispositions' (ibid.).

say, something fated, love of the self necessarily manifests itself in a love of fate. That Montaigne is a lover of fate, seeking to alter not the slightest thing about his life, is the principal message of 'On repentance'. After telling us that he 'rarely repents' and that 'he cannot do better', he goes on to admit to having 'few regrets for affairs of any sort', since 'no idea of yours, by wish or by thought, can change one jot without overturning the whole order of Nature, both past and future' (III.2; T793, S918 [618]). But Montaigne's attitude toward the fatedness of his life reflects no Stoical resignation, the calm acceptance of fate through the alignment of one's thoughts with the rational order of the universe; it reflects, rather, an embrace of fate, the unconditional affirmation of his own life, an affirmation encapsulated in the following statement: 'If I had to live again, I would live as I have done; I neither regret the past nor fear for the future' (ibid. T794, S920 [620]). So, despite having lived through a brutal civil war and despite the great pain and suffering of his life—suffering that only intensifies as he ages—Montaigne would, if offered the chance of another life, not want a different life or a better life, but the very same life again.

Molner goes so far as to suggest that Montaigne could have been a 'sketch' for Nietzsche's conception of the overhuman, and though admitting that this speculation 'may seem problematic', he sees striking similarities between the overhuman's disposition toward life and the basic 'character' of Montaigne's affirmation.[70] A comparison between Montaigne and the overhuman may seem problematic because, unlike the overhuman, Montaigne's affirmation does not represent what Nietzsche considers to be the 'highest' possible affirmation of life (EH, 'Z' 1): the 'most world-affirming human being' is one 'who has not only come to terms and learned to get along with whatever was and is', but is an individual 'who also wants to have what was and is repeated into all eternity' (BGE 56). Thus, while Montaigne frames his affirmation personally, and exclusively in terms of his own life, the overhuman's affirmation takes on cosmic dimensions, for as Lampert explains, in the case of willing the eternal recurrence of the same, 'affirmation of the self circles into affirmation of the whole as its source, which circles into affirmation of the self'.[71] Yet, for all that, it must be

[70] Molner, "The Influence of Montaigne on Nietzsche", p. 93.
[71] Lampert, *Nietzsche's Task*, p. 119. There are, of course, other, important differences between Montaigne's affirmation of life and that of the overhuman, owing to the changed historical context between the early modern and late modern periods. The overhuman, living in a scientifically advanced age, post-Galileo and post-Darwin, has to shoulder a 'greater burden' of 'intellectual conscience' than an individual of the late Renaissance (Pippin, *Nietzsche, Psychology and First Philosophy*, p. 123). The overhuman's transvaluation of values represents a response to the unique

acknowledged that affirming eternal recurrence necessarily involves cultivating, as Montaigne strives to do, an attitude of *amor fati*, a love of fate. The affirmer of eternal recurrence—one who desires to have 'what was and is repeated into all eternity'—must be a lover of fate: 'My formula for human greatness is *amor fati*: that you do not want anything to be different … not just to tolerate necessity … but to love it' (EH 2.10).[72]

Nietzsche, then, follows Montaigne in conceiving life affirmation in terms of a love of necessity. And looking beyond this shared endorsement of a particular existential attitude, there are further parallels between the two thinkers in this regard that should also be noted. For instance, when Nietzsche first broaches the idea of eternal recurrence, in the form of a thought experiment in the *Gay Science*, he ponders 'how well disposed' the affirmer of eternal recurrence would have to be to themselves in order 'to long for nothing more fervently than for this ultimate eternal confirmation and seal' (GS 341). For Ure, this formulation of eternal recurrence 'echoes the Stoic notion that the aim of self-testing is to … become … one's own friend'.[73] But of course, it also strongly echoes Montaigne's understanding of the ideal relationship toward the self as one of loving friendship, and given the many other ways in which the *Essays* prefigure the Nietzschean ideal of becoming what you are—as well as his intensive study of the *Essays* in the 1883-5 period—perhaps Montaigne should be viewed as a more important influence in this respect. In addition, whereas Montaigne, foregoing regret, wishes to alter nothing about his life, as to do so would entail 'overturning the whole order of nature', Nietzsche casts his fatalism in the following manner: 'An individual is a piece of fate. … To say to an individual: "change yourself" means demanding that everything change. … But we who are different, we immoralists, have opened our hearts to all types of … *approval*' (TI 5.6). And if Montaigne conceives his 'approval' of existence in terms of an opposition to 'repentance', to feelings of guilt and remorse of any kind, Nietzsche stresses the seriousness with which, through the doctrines of eternal

---

and momentous cultural situation that modern science has helped bring about: the 'death of God' and the loss of any basis for transcendent meaning and value (GS 125). On the Nietzschean view, European society is on the brink of a cultural crisis, 'the death of God' precipitating the onset of a passive nihilism. As a consequence, for Nietzsche, the overhuman's willing of the eternal recurrence of the same—thereby conferring on earthly life the highest possible value—constitutes the overcoming of this passive nihilism (see Magnus, "Eternal Recurrence", pp. 369-70).

[72] We can thus understand Nietzsche's doctrine of eternal recurrence as the 'essential item' in a possible future religion of earthly gratitude, since it offers an ideal that is 'rooted in the passion of love and gratitude for life and world as they are' (Lampert, "Nietzsche's Philosophy and True Religion", pp. 141-3).

[73] Ure, *Nietzsche's Therapy*, p. 73.

recurrence and *amor fati*, his philosophy has taken up 'the fight against lingering and vengeful feelings' (EH 1.6).[74]

The moment

For Nietzsche, the highest possible affirmation of life entails not just a love of fate but also a particular relationship to temporality. In *Zarathustra*, in the section entitled 'On the Vision and Riddle', we find an investigation of the riddle of time, commencing with the metaphor of a gateway: Zarathustra and the Dwarf stop before a gateway, over which is inscribed 'the moment'. Zarathustra observes that the gateway has two faces; a lane stretches out from each face onto eternity. The Dwarf proposes that 'time itself is a circle', suggesting that in eternity the opposite lanes unite in the gateway (Z 3.2.2). Zarathustra, however, rejects this simplistic answer, as to characterize time as cyclical fails to capture the infinite significance the moment attains if one accepts the eternal recurrence of the same. For if everything recurs eternally, Zarathustra asks, 'are not all things knotted together so tightly that this moment draws after it all things that are to come?' (ibid.) In other words, each moment of the eternal past and the eternal future may be understood as being 'contained' in the present. With the notion of the eternal recurrence of the same, Nietzsche thus intends the most extreme intensification of the moment.[75] Accordingly, in *The Gay Science*, he describes the task of affirming eternal recurrence as the 'heaviest weight', implying the enormous burden of responsibility on the individual once one accepts that time recurs eternally. The overhuman's affirmation of eternal recurrence, therefore, may be viewed as indicative of an 'attitude which would transform the finite moment into a fated eternity'.[76]

---

[74] Again, for Ure, Nietzsche comes to develop his ideal of *amor fati* primarily via his reading of the Stoics (pp. 28, 73). But Montaigne and Nietzsche hold a common opposition to the Stoic response to fate. Nietzsche accuses the Stoics of trying to impose on nature their own vision of a universal *Logos*, labouring under 'the insane hope that *because* you know how to tyrannize yourselves—Stoicism is self-tyranny—nature, too, lets herself be tyrannized' (BGE 9). Nietzsche rejects this tyrannical way of overcoming fate, in favour of *amor fati*, an approach he describes in terms of a 'trusting fatalism' (TI 9.49). Such a fatalism is on display in the *Essays*. Montaigne, in contrast to the sage who attempts to 'maim fortune herself', to 'bully' and 'master' fate, through the rigidity of a 'strong and solid' soul, fashions the kind of 'adaptable' and 'flexible' soul that would embrace and affirm fate unconditionally (I.42; T252, S290 [190]; I.54; T298-9, S349 [226]).

[75] 'This model stresses to us … how the present never leaves behind the past, and how it is also tied to a fated future. In thinking time as a circle, we imagine that the future has already been, and that the past will be again, which conveys the relevance they really do have to meaning now. We imagine them all "present" together in the ring' (Richardson, "Nietzsche on Time and Becoming", p. 224).

[76] Magnus, *Nietzsche's Existential Imperative*, p. 142.

Molner fails to mention the overhuman's celebration of time and becoming, yet in this regard also a comparison with Montaigne is warranted. Always framed in the present, although composed over a twenty year period, the *Essays* document a 'series' of moments, what Montaigne 'feels *now*'.[77] Following the Stoics, he counsels against dwelling on the past, or worrying about the future, for such concerns 'rob us' of the 'now'; rather, we should, he urges, strive to 'rejoice in the present' (I.3; T18, S11 [8]; I.11; T43, S43 [28]). And though Montaigne may not see the moment in quite the same manner as the overhuman, as recurring eternally, his love of fate takes the form of a complete immersion in the present:

> I do not know how to "pass" time, I savour it and hold on to it. … I know life to be of great account and delightful. … I want to arrest the swiftness of its passing by the swiftness of my capture, compensating for the speed with which it drains away by the intensity of my enjoyment (III.13; T1091-2, S1262-3 [853-4]).

As with the doctrine of eternal recurrence, here we may see the vertical expansion of the moment, a radical heightening in the significance of the content of experience. Here, too, we see a highly personal and existential engagement with temporality. Montaigne, like Nietzsche, aims to have the immeasurable value of existence before one's consciousness at all times, 'bestowing upon each moment of life the fullest possible justification':[78] 'When I dance, I dance. When I sleep, I sleep; and when I am strolling in a beautiful orchard … I bring [my thoughts] back to the walk, to the orchard, to the delight of being alone there' (ibid. T1087-8, S1258 [850]). What is more, both thinkers, determined to attain a way of life lived with the utmost intensity in the present, offer a picture of time that is radically discontinuous, each moment being entirely discrete. Hence, Nietzsche conceives the moment as a 'fated eternity', while Montaigne takes each instant as 'an absolute beginning'.[79]

Both Montaigne and Nietzsche seek to translate humanity back into nature, and return sacredness to the earth. Philosophers of immanence, affirming the here and now, they draw us back to what Nietzsche refers to as 'the closest things': back to the body,

[77] Sayce, *The Essays of Montaigne*, p. 100.
[78] Starobinski, *Montaigne in Motion*, p. 78.
[79] Ibid., p. 86.

to feeling and sensation, to matters of climate, location and nutrition, to true and vigorous living in the present. Philosophies of transcendence and ascetic ideals for too long have taught humanity '*to despise* the present and neighbourhood and life', such that, for both thinkers, it is high time that we once again 'become *good neighbours to the closest things*' (WS 16). Consequently, Montaigne, throughout the *Essays,* aims to show 'how, by attending to them properly, the most banal and quotidian activities—eating, drinking … moving, breathing and so on—can provide … the spiritual sustenance which allows us to affirm even our misfortunes and sufferings'.[80] For this reason, he expresses admiration for 'that girl from Miletus who, seeing the local philosopher Thales with his eyes staring upward … made him trip over', so that he might redirect his attention downward, earthward, 'to everything lying before his feet' (II.12; T519, S604 [402]). Moreover, to affirm time and becoming is to invest what lies before and near us with the highest value, in the sense that 'learning to dignify the closest things' becomes 'the very practice of temporal awareness'.[81] Lovers of fate, Montaigne and Nietzsche promote an art of living or way of life in which the self-enjoying soul savours and celebrates every moment. Practitioners of a religion of earthly gratitude, they would treat the simple and the mundane with the deepest reverence. Montaigne, when contemplating the ideal circumstances under which his life might come to an end, offers us the following image: 'I want death to find me planting my cabbages, neither worrying about it nor the unfinished garden' (I.20; T87, S99 [62]).

[80] Hamilton, "Nietzsche on Nobility and the Affirmation of Life", p. 186.
[81] Del Caro, *Grounding the Nietzsche Rhetoric of Earth*, p. 121.

Conclusion

In so many ways, just as he begins to move forward as a thoroughly independent thinker—no longer burdened by the demands of a university position, newly recovered from Schopenhauerian pessimism, at last free of Wagner's overbearing influence—Nietzsche finds an exemplar in Montaigne. With his cheerful embrace of life and his resolutely naturalized perspective, Montaigne offers Nietzsche support in his effort to elaborate a 'robust' form of pessimism, a pessimism of strength—a Dionysian pessimism. What is more, an examination of the influence of the *Essays* on Nietzsche's thought also forces us to consider the significance of the *Untimely Meditations* to an understanding of Nietzsche's mature philosophy, not only in terms of his conception of the philosopher but also in terms of the kind of existential attitude he would wish to endorse. In 'Schopenhauer as Educator' he proposes that to be a genuine philosopher one must, like Montaigne, possess the strength to say 'Yes' to life and be its 'advocate'. In addition, seeing Montaigne—a philosopher who embraces becoming and celebrates the body—as an exemplar for Nietzsche as he writes 'Schopenhauer as Educator', allows us to draw out continuities in thought between this work and *The Birth of Tragedy*.

With respect to Nietzsche's philosophical development, Montaigne's importance goes far beyond that of an encouraging voice, merely confirming the legitimacy of a philosophical path already taken. Most fundamentally, what Nietzsche learned from the *Essays* was the importance of self-knowledge and the 'art of psychological dissection', an art that would, among other things, help him to appreciate the roots of the unhealthy 'metaphysical need' that had led him to endorse romantic pessimism. What he learned, too, was a philosophical method: experimental philosophizing. Moreover, as an exemplar who connects the early and middle phases of Nietzsche's philosophical career, Montaigne helps us to make sense of what appears to be a complete turnaround in Nietzsche's thinking between the *Untimely Meditations* and *Human, All Too Human*: if one takes Montaigne as Nietzsche's 'educator', his change in writing style and transition to a more psychologically-orientated philosophy looks more like a natural progression than a startling reversal. To view Montaigne as Nietzsche's educator also compels us to recognize the many themes that the *Untimely Meditations* and *Human, All Too Human* share in common—to do with caring for the soul, 'authentic' existence and

the importance of the Socratic imperative: 'Know thyself'. Indeed, once we understand Montaigne as a model for the Nietzschean free spirit, we come to appreciate that Nietzsche's conception of the free spirit has its beginnings in 'Schopenhauer as Educator', with his presentation of the philosopher as an individual of complete intellectual independence, who lives an 'awakened life' beyond the deadening grip of custom.

Unlike the other French moralists, Montaigne continues to be a major influence on the works of Nietzsche's late period. As regards Nietzsche's attack on soul atomism and his 'new' conception of the soul as a subjective multiplicity—not to mention his appreciation of the unconscious workings of the mind—the *Essays* would have provided ample stimulation to his thought. Montaigne's denunciation of ascetic ideals and his diagnosis of an axiological sickness at the heart of European culture prefigure central motifs of Nietzsche's mature philosophy. Repudiating the idea of a fundamental opposition between good and evil drives and passions, both thinkers condemn traditional notions of morality as anti-natural and anti-life, providing instead a conception of the ethical life centred on psychological and physiological health—the denial or suppression of natural desires and predispositions playing no part. More significant still, not only does Montaigne's influence extend to the final years of Nietzsche's productive life but we also discover that the *Essays* were of crucial significance for the writing of his philosophical autobiography, *Ecce Homo*. A thinker who acknowledges the intimate connection between philosophy and biography and who displays an unparalleled ability to turn pain and suffering into a higher form of 'health', Montaigne demonstrates the kind of 'wisdom' and 'cleverness' that *Ecce Homo* seeks to document. And the *Essays*, centred on ideas of self-fashioning, self-legislation and an understanding of the self as fate, offers, like *Ecce Homo*, a blueprint in 'How to Become What you Are'.

This study of the Montaigne-Nietzsche relationship has enabled us to explore and make plain the more radical aspects of the *Essays*: Montaigne's rejection of metaphysics and any transcendent basis for morality; his analysis of the origins of morality in the all-too-human aspects of human nature; his understanding of the psychology of extreme virtue and the relationship between cruelty and voluptuous pleasure; his willingness to construe human existence as just another form of animal life; his disavowal of Judaeo-Christian values. Nietzsche's Montaigne is a 'critical spirit' as well as a 'free spirit', a true exponent of the 'plastic power' of the individual to

creatively engage tradition—and certainly no advocate of orthodoxy. To explore the *Essays* from a Nietzschean perspective is to gain fresh insight into the wealth of ideas they offer, relating to such diverse matters as the importance of smells and the foundations of morality. Furthermore, if the Montaigne that Nietzsche idolizes is a very different figure to the Montaigne of conventional scholarly opinion—deserving pride of place in the ranks of philosophers—the Nietzsche that Montaigne inspires is a very different philosopher to the Nietzsche of popular opinion, the gloomy disciple of Schopenhauerian pessimism.

And in coming to accept Montaigne as a key exemplar for Nietzsche, one achieves a clearer insight into Nietzsche's conception of the philosophical life as an art of living. While both thinkers follow the Greco-Roman model of philosophy—where philosophy is understood as a form of self-therapy and care of the soul—they reject central features of that model: both Montaigne and Nietzsche, placing the demands of passion and instinct above those of reason, promote a form of self-mastery that seeks to cultivate a spontaneity and flexibility of character, an effortless virtue. One also attains a better understanding of the roots of Nietzsche's naturalism—a scientian naturalism that recognizes the limitations of mechanistic laws and casual-deterministic reasoning—and what he means by a 'stronger' scepticism: an experimental mode of enquiry compatible with life-affirmation and a 'certainty of value standards'. To fully appreciate Nietzsche's thought, it should be recognized that, from the beginning to the end of his philosophical life, Montaigne was for him a thinker of the deepest personal and philosophical significance, perhaps his favourite writer.

Owing to considerations of space, I have barely touched on the aestheticism of both thinkers. For even if they are naturalists who advocate a return to nature, they also see art, artifice and the aesthetic as centrally involved in all domains of life. More than that, they understand our desire for appearance and illusion as itself natural, as an essential feature of the human condition. In this way, both Montaigne and Nietzsche could perhaps be best described as 'artful' naturalists.[1] At the most basic level, they understand human perception as inherently creative and inventive, and human cognition as a fundamentally imaginative and fantasizing capacity. We have seen how both thinkers soften the line between nature and convention, but they also blur the distinction between appearance and reality as well as the boundary between authentic self and

[1] Christa Davis Acampora suggests that Nietzsche' philosophical project can be best understood in terms of an 'artful naturalism' ("Naturalism and Nietzsche's Moral Psychology").

social mask. We thus find Montaigne and Nietzsche emphasizing the motif of the world as theatre and life as play. The relationship between naturalism and aestheticism, then, is of paramount importance to the philosophies of both thinkers. Further study on the implications and significance of the parallels between them in this regard should prove immensely fruitful.

Bibliography

Abbey, Ruth. *Nietzsche's Middle Period*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.

Acampora, C. D. "Beholding Nietzsche: *Ecce Homo*, Fate, and Freedom". *The Oxford Handbook of Nietzsche*, eds. Ken Gemes and John Richardson. Oxford, UK.: Oxford University Press, 2013, 363-385.

_____. "Naturalism and Nietzsche's Moral Psychology". *A Companion to Nietzsche*, ed. Keith Ansell-Pearson. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006, 314-333.

Allison, David B. *Reading the New Nietzsche: The Birth of Tragedy, The Gay Science, Thus Spoke Zarathustra, and On the Genealogy of Morals*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001.

Ansell Pearson, Keith. *Nietzsche contra Rousseau: A Study of Nietzsche's Moral and Political Thought*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.

_____. "The Incorporation of Truth: Towards the Overhuman". *A Companion to Nietzsche*, ed. Keith Ansell-Pearson. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006, 230-249.

_____. "'Holding on to the Sublime': On Nietzsche's Early 'Unfashionable' Project". *The Oxford Handbook of Nietzsche*, eds. Ken Gemes and John Richardson. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2013, 226-251.

Aurelius, Meditations. *Marcus Aurelius Meditations*, trans. Gregory Hays. Toronto: Random House, 2002.

Babich, Babette E. "Nietzsche's 'Gay' Science". *A Companion to Nietzsche*, ed. Keith Ansell-Pearson. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006, 97-114.

Beam, Craig. *Virtue Beyond Morality: Nietzsche's Ethical Naturalism*. Dissertation University of Waterloo: National Library of Canada, 1999. *University of Waterloo Electronic Theses and Dissertations*. Web. <https://uwspace.uwaterloo.ca/handle/10012/432?show=full>.

Berkowitz, Peter. "Nietzsche's Ethics of History". *The Review of Politics* 56.1 (1994): 5-27.

Berry, Jessica. "The Pyrrhonian Revival in Montaigne and Nietzsche". *Journal of the History of Ideas* 65.3 (2004): 497-514.

_____..*Nietzsche and the Ancient Skeptical Tradition*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.

_____."Nietzsche and the Greeks". *The Oxford Handbook of Nietzsche*, eds. Ken Gemes and John Richardson. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2013, 83-107.

Bett, Richard. "Nietzsche on the Skeptics and Nietzsche as Skeptic". *Archiv Für Geschichte Der Philosophie* 82.1 (2000): 62-86.

_____. "Nietzsche and the Romans". *The Journal of Nietzsche Studies* 42 (2011): 7-31.

Brobjer, Thomas H. *Nietzsche's Ethics of Character: A Study of Nietzsche's Ethics and Its Place in the History of Moral Thinking*. Uppsala: Department of History of Science and Ideas, Uppsala University, 1995.

_____. *Nietzsche's Philosophical Context: An Intellectual Biography*. Urbana: University of Illinois, 2008.

Brochard, Victor. *Les Sceptiques Grecs*. Paris: J. Vrin, 1959.

Brush, Craig. *From the Perspective of the Self: Montaigne's Self-portrait*. New York: Fordham University Press, 1994.

Calder, Ruth. "Montaigne as Satirist". *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 17.2 (1986): 225-235.

Came, Daniel. "The Themes of Affirmation and Illusion in *The Birth of Tragedy* and Beyond". *The Oxford Handbook of Nietzsche*, eds. Ken Gemes and John Richardson. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2013, 209-225.

Caro, Adrian Del. *Grounding the Nietzsche Rhetoric of Earth*. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2004.

Clark, Maudemarie. *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.

_____. and David Dudrick. "The Naturalisms of Beyond Good and Evil". *A Companion to Nietzsche*, ed. Keith Ansell-Pearson. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006, 148-167.

_____. "Suffering and the Affirmation of Life". *The Journal of Nietzsche Studies* 43.1 (2012): 87-98.

Coleman, Dorothy Gabe. *Montaigne's Essais*. London: Allen & Unwin, 1987.

Conant, James. "Nietzsche's Perfectionism: A Reading of Schopenhauer as Educator". *Nietzsche's Postmoralism: Essays on Nietzsche's Prelude to*

Philosophy's Future, ed. Richard Schacht. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001, 181-257.

Conway, Daniel W. *Nietzsche and the Political*. London: Routledge, 1997.

Costa, Dennis. "The Matter at Hand: Normative Ethics and Self-Stimulation in Montaigne's 'Du repentir'". *MLN* 124.5 (2009): 169-189.

Cowan, Robert B. "Nietzsche's Attempted Escape from Schopenhauer's South Asian Sources in *The Birth Of Tragedy*". *German Studies Review* 30.3 (2007): 537-556.

Cox, Christoph. *Nietzsche: Naturalism and Interpretation*. Berkeley: University of California, 1999.

Davidson, Arnold I. "Introduction". *Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault*, ed. Arnold I. Davidson. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1995, 1-45.

De Bleeckere, Sylvain. "'Also Sprach Zarathustra': Die Neugestaltung Der 'Geburt Der Tragödie'". *Nietzsche-Studien* 8 (1979): 270-290.

Defaux, Gérard. "A Propos 'Des Coches' De Montaigne (III, 6): De L'écriture De L'histoire à la representation du moi". *Montaigne Studies* 6 (1994): 135-162.

Dienstag, Joshua Foa. "Nietzsche's Dionysian Pessimism". *The American Political Science Review* 95.4 (2001): 923-937.

Donnellan, Brendan. "Nietzsche and La Rochefoucauld". *The German Quarterly* 52.3 (1979): 303-318.

_____. *Nietzsche and the French Moralists*. Bonn: Bouvier, 1982.

Edelman, Christopher. "Montaigne's Moral Objectivism". *Philosophy and Literature* 35.1 (2011): 32-50.

Emerson, Ralph Waldo. *The Essential Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, ed. Brooks Atkinson. New York: Modern Library, 2000.

Epictetus. *Discourses and Selected Writings*, trans. Robert F. Dobbin. London: Penguin, 2008.

Farquhar, Sue W. "Irony and the Ethics of Self-Portraiture in Montaigne's *De La Praesumption*". *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 26.4 (1995): 791-803.

Force, Pierre. "Innovation as Spiritual Exercise: Montaigne and Pascal". *Journal of the History of Ideas* 66.1 (2005): 17-35.

Frame, Donald Murdoch. *Montaigne: A Biography*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1965.

_____. *Montaigne's Essais: A Study*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1969.

Franco, Pal. "Nietzsche's *Human, All Too Human* and the Problem of Culture". *The Review of Politics* 69.2 (2007): 215-243.

Friedrich, Hugo. *Montaigne*, ed. Philippe Desan. Berkeley: University of California, 1991.

Frisch, Andrea. "Montaigne and the Ethics of Memory". *L'Esprit Créateur* 46.1 (2006): 23-31.

Fuss, Peter, and Henry Shapiro, eds. *Nietzsche: A Self-Portrait from His Letters*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971.

Gambino, Giacomo. "Nietzsche and the Greeks: Identity, Politics, and Tragedy". *Polity* 28.4 (1996): 415-444.

Gasche, Rodolphe. "*Ecce Homo* or the Written Body". *Looking after Nietzsche*, ed. Laurence A. Rickels. Albany: State University of New York, 1990, 113-136.

Gemes, Ken, and John Richardson, eds. *The Oxford Handbook of Nietzsche*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2013.

Gerhardt, Volker. "The Body, the Self, and the Ego". *A Companion to Nietzsche*, ed. Keith Ansell-Pearson. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006, 273-296.

Gillespie, Michael Allen. "Montaigne's Humanistic Liberalism". *The Journal of Politics* 47.1 (1985): 140-159.

Goyet, Francis. "La Notion éthique d' habitude dans Les *Essais* : articuler l'art et la nature". *MLN* 118.4 (2003): 1070-1091.

Pierre Hadot. "Émerveillements". *La Bibliothèque Imaginaire Du Collège De France*. Paris: Le Monde Editions, 1990.

_____. *Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault*, ed. Arnold I. Davidson. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1995.

Hallie, Philip P. "Ethics of Montaigne's 'De La Cruauté'". *O Un Amy!: Essays on Montaigne in Honor of Donald M. Frame*, ed. Raymond C. La Charité. Lexington, KY: French Forum, 1977, 156-171.

Hamilton, Christopher. "Nietzsche on Nobility and the Affirmation of Life". *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 3.2 (2000): 169-193.

Hartle, Ann. "Montaigne's Accidental Moral Philosophy". *Philosophy and Literature* 24.1 (2000): 138-153.

_____. *Michel De Montaigne: Accidental Philosopher*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

_____. "Montaigne and Skepticism". *The Cambridge Companion to Montaigne*, ed. Ullrich Langer. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005, 183-206.

_____. "The Transformation of Virtue in Montaigne's Essays". *L'Esprit Créateur* 46.1 (2006): 3-12.

Heitsch, Dorothea B. *Practising Reform in Montaigne's Essais*. Leiden: Brill, 2000.

Henry, Patrick. "Getting The Message in Montaigne's Essays". *Philosophy and Literature* 24.1 (2000): 165-184.

Hoffman, George. "The Montaigne Monopoly: Revising the *Essais* under the French Privilege System". *PMLA* 108.2 (1993): 308-319.

_____. "The investigation of nature". *The Cambridge Companion to Montaigne*, ed. Ullrich Langer. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005, 163-182.

Janaway, Christopher. *Beyond Selflessness: Reading Nietzsche's Genealogy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.

_____. "Nietzsche on Morality, Drives and Human Greatness". *Nietzsche, Naturalism, and Normativity*, eds. Christopher Janaway and Simon Robertson. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012, 183-201.

Kaufmann, Walter A. *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist*, 4th ed. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University, 1974.

Knight, A. H. "Nietzsche and Epicurean Philosophy". *Philosophy*, 8.32 (1933): 431-455.

Kritzman, Lawrence D. "The Socratic Makeover: Montaigne's 'De La Physionomie' and the Ethics of the Impossible". *L'Esprit Créateur* 46.1 (2006): 75-85.

Lampert, Laurence. *Nietzsche's Teaching: An Interpretation of Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986.

_____. "Who Is Nietzsche's Epicurus". *International Studies in Philosophy* 24.2 (1992): 99-105.

_____. *Nietzsche and Modern Times: A Study of Bacon, Descartes, and Nietzsche*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993.

_____. *Leo Strauss and Nietzsche*. Chicago: University of Chicago, 1996.

_____. "Nietzsche's Best Jokes". *Nietzsche's Futures*, ed. John Lippitt. New York: St. Martin's, 1999, 65-81.

_____. *Nietzsche's Task: An Interpretation of Beyond Good and Evil*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001.

_____. "Nietzsche's Philosophy and True Religion". *A Companion to Nietzsche*, ed. Keith Ansell-Pearson. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006, 133-147.

Lange, Friedrich Albert. *The History of Materialism*. New York: Arno, 1974.

Langer, Ullrich. "Introduction". *The Cambridge Companion to Montaigne*, ed. Ullrich Langer. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005, 1-8.

Large, Duncan. "Introduction". *Ecce Homo: How to Become What You Are*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007, xi-xxxxvii.

Leiter, Brian. *Nietzsche on Morality*. London: Routledge, 2002.

_____. and Neil Sinhababu, eds. *Nietzsche and Morality*. Oxford: Clarendon, 2007.

_____. "Nietzsche's Naturalism Reconsidered". *The Oxford Handbook of Nietzsche*, eds. Ken Gemes and John Richardson. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2013, 576-598.

Lippitt, John. "Laughter: A Tool in Moral Perfectionism". *Nietzsche's Futures*, ed. John Lippitt. New York: St. Martin's, 1999, 99-125.

Lom, Petr. *The Limits of Doubt: The Moral and Political Implications of Skepticism*. Albany: State University of New York, 2001.

Lucretius. *On the Nature of the Universe*, ed. Ronald Melville, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.

MacPhail, Eric. "Montaigne and the Praise of Sparta". *Rhetorica: A Journal of the History of Rhetoric* 20.2 (2002): 193-211.

Magnus, Bernd. *Nietzsche's Existential Imperative*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978.

_____. "Eternal Recurrence". *Nietzsche-Studien* 8 (1979): 362-377.

_____."Nietzsche's Mitigated Scepticism". *Nietzsche-Studien* 9 (1980): 260-267.

_____. and Kathleen Marie. Higgins, eds. *The Cambridge Companion to Nietzsche*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

Marchi, Dudley M. *Montaigne among the Moderns: Receptions of the Essais*. Providence, RI: Berghahn, 1994.

May, Simon. *Nietzsche on Freedom and Autonomy*, ed. Ken Gemes. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.

Mclean, Ian. "Montaigne and the Truth of the Schools". *The Cambridge Companion to Montaigne*, ed. Ullrich Langer. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005, 142-162.

Middleton, Christopher, ed. *Selected Letters of Friedrich Nietzsche*. Chicago: University of Chicago, 1969.

Melehy, Hassan. "Montaigne and Ethics: The Case of Animals". *L'Esprit Créateur* 46.1 (2006): 96-107.

Milkowski, Marcin. "Idyllic Heroism: Nietzsche's View of Epicurus". *Journal of Nietzsche Studies* 15 (1998): 70-79.

Molner, David. "The Influence of Montaigne on Nietzsche: A Raison d'etre in the Sun". *Nietzsche-Studien* 22.1 (1993): 80-93.

Montaigne, Michel de. *Montaigne: The Complete Essays*, trans. Donald Frame. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1958.

Moore, Gregory. "Nietzsche and Evolutionary Theory". *A Companion to Nietzsche*, ed. Keith Ansell-Pearson. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006, 517-531.

Nehamas, Alexander. *Nietzsche, Life as Literature*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985.

_____. *The Art of Living: Socratic Reflections from Plato to Foucault*. Berkeley: University of California, 1998.

_____. "Introduction". *Writings from the Early Notebooks*, ed. Raymond Geuss and Alexander Nehamas, trans. Ladislaus Löb. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2009, ix-xxxvii.

Newkirk, Thomas. "Montaigne's Revisions". *Rhetoric Review* 24.3 (2005): 298-315.

Nietzsche, Friedrich. *The Birth of Tragedy and Other Writings*, eds. Raymond Geuss and Ronald Speirs. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

_____. *Writings from the Late Notebooks*, trans. Kate Sturge. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

_____. *Writings from the Early Notebooks*, ed. Raymond Geuss and Alexander Nehamas, trans. Ladislaus Löb. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

Nishitani, Keiji. *The Self-Overcoming of Nihilism*, trans. Graham Parkes. Albany: State University of New York, 1990.

Norman, Judith. "Nietzsche and Early Romanticism". *Journal of the History of Ideas* 63.3 (2002): 501-519.

Nussbaum, Martha C. "The Transfigurations of Intoxication: Nietzsche, Schopenhauer, and Dionysus". *Arion* Third 1.2 (1991): 75-111.

O' Brien, John. "Montaigne and Antiquity: Fancies and Grotesques". *The Cambridge Companion to Montaigne*, ed. Ullrich Langer. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005, 53-73.

Parkes, Graham. "The Overflowing Soul: Images of Transformation in Nietzsche's Zarathustra". *Man and World* 16.4 (1983): 335-348.

_____. "A Cast of Many: Nietzsche and Depth-psychological Pluralism". *Man and World* 22.4 (1989): 453-470.

_____. ed. *Nietzsche and Asian Thought*. Chicago: University of Chicago, 1991.

_____. *Composing the Soul: Reaches of Nietzsche's Psychology*. Chicago: University of Chicago, 1994.

_____. "Nietzsche and East Asian Thought: Influences, Impacts, and Resonances". *The Cambridge Companion to Nietzsche*, eds. Bernd Magnus and Kathleen Marie. Higgins, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996, 356-383.

_____. "Staying Loyal to the Earth: Nietzsche as an Ecological Thinker". *Nietzsche's Futures*, ed. John Lippitt. New York: St. Martin's, 1999, 167-188.

_____. "Nature and the Human 'Redivinized': Māhayāna Buddhist Themes in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*". *Nietzsche and the Divine*, eds. John Lippitt and Jim Urpeth. Manchester: Clinamen, 2000, 181-199.

_____. "Zhuangzi and Nietzsche on the Human and Nature". *Environmental Philosophy* 10.1 (2013): 1-24.

Pippin, Robert B. "Morality as Psychology, Psychology as Morality: Nietzsche, Eros, and Clumsy Lovers". *Nietzsche's Postmoralism: Essays on Nietzsche's Prelude to Philosophy's Future*, ed. Richard Schacht. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2001, 79-99.

_____. *Nietzsche, Psychology, and First Philosophy*. Chicago: University of Chicago, 2010.

Plato. *Plato: Republic*, trans. Robin Waterfield. New York: Oxford University Press, 1994.

_____. *Five Dialogues*, trans. G. M. Grube. Indianapolis: Hackett, 2002.

Quint, David. *Montaigne and the Quality of Mercy: Ethical and Political Themes in the Essais*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998.

_____. "Letting Oneself Go: 'De La Colere' and Montaigne's Ethical Reflections". *Philosophy and Literature* 24.1 (2000): 126-137.

Raga Rosaleny, Vicente. "The Current Debate about Montaigne's Skepticism". *Skepticism in the Modern Age: Building on the Work of Richard Popkin*, eds. Maia Neto José Raimundo, Gianni Paganini, and John Christian. Laursen. Leiden: Brill, 2009, 55-70.

Railton, Peter. "Nietzsche's Normative Theory? The Art and Skill of Living Well". *Nietzsche, Naturalism, and Normativity*, eds. Christopher Janaway and Simon Robertson. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012, 20-51.

Reginster, B. *The Affirmation of Life: Nietzsche on Overcoming Nihilism*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006.

Regosin, Richard L. *The Matter of My Book: Montaigne's Essais as the Book of the Self*. Berkeley: University of California, 1977.

_____. "Rusing with the Law: Montaigne and the Ethics of Uncertainty". *L'Esprit Créateur* 46.1 (2006): 51-63.

Ribeiro, Brian. "Montaigne on Witches and the Authority of Religion in the Public". *Philosophy and Literature* 33.2 (2009): 235-251.

Richardson, John. *Nietzsche's System*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996.

_____. "Nietzsche Contra Darwin". *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 65.3 (2002): 537-75.

_____. *Nietzsche's New Darwinism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.

_____. "Nietzsche on Time and Becoming". *A Companion to Nietzsche*, ed. Keith Ansell-Pearson. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006, 208-229.

Rickels, Laurence A., ed. *Looking after Nietzsche*. Albany: State University of New York, 1990.

Rigolot, François. "Essaying Hatred: Montaigne's Poetics of Ethical Allusiveness". *L'Esprit Créateur* 46.1 (2006): 32-38.

Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*, trans. Franklin Philip. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.

Safranski, Rüdiger. *Nietzsche: A Philosophical Biography*. New York: W.W. Norton, 2002.

Salaquarda, Jorg. "Der Antichrist". *Nietzsche-Studien* 2 (1973): 91-136.

Sallis, John. *Crossings: Nietzsche and the Space of Tragedy*. Chicago: University of Chicago, 1991.

Sayce, Richard Anthony. *The Essays of Montaigne: A Critical Exploration*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1972.

Schacht, Richard. "Philosophy as Linguistic Analysis: A Nietzschean Critique". *Philosophical Studies* 25.3 (1974): 153-171.

_____. "Nietzsche's Second Thoughts about Art". *Monist* 64.2 (1981): 231-246.

_____. *Nietzsche*. London: Routledge and K. Paul, 1983.

_____. ed. *Nietzsche, Genealogy, Morality: Essays on Nietzsche's Genealogy of Morals*. Berkeley: University of California, 1994.

_____. *Making Sense of Nietzsche: Reflections Timely and Untimely*. Urbana: University of Illinois, 1995.

_____. ed. *Nietzsche's Postmoralism: Essays on Nietzsche's Prelude to Philosophy's Future*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

_____. "Nietzsche's Naturalism". *Journal of Nietzsche Studies* 43.2 (2012): 185-212.

Schaefer, David L. "The Good, the Beautiful, and the Useful: Montaigne's Transvaluation of Values". *The American Political Science Review* 73.1 (1979): 139-154.

_____. "Montaigne and the Classical Tradition". *International Journal of the Classical Tradition* 8.2 (2001): 179-194.

_____. "Montaigne's Political Skepticism". *Polity* 11.4 (1979): 512-541.

_____. "The Good, the Beautiful, and the Useful: Montaigne's Transvaluation of Values". *The American Political Science Review* 73.1 (1979): 139-154.

_____. *The Political Philosophy of Montaigne*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990.

Schopenhauer, Arthur. *The World as Will and Representation*, trans. E. F. J. Payne. New York: Dover Publications, 1966.

Schrift, Alan D. "Rethinking the Subject: Or, How One Becomes-Other Than What One Is". *Nietzsche's Postmoralism: Essays on Nietzsche's Prelude to Philosophy's Future*, ed. Richard Schacht. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001, 47-62.

Schwartz, Jerome. "Reflections on Montaigne's Ethical Thinking". *Philosophy and Literature* 24.1 (2000): 154-164.

Small, Robin. "Being, Becoming and Time in Nietzsche". *The Oxford Handbook of Nietzsche*, eds. Ken Gemes and John Richardson. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2013, 629-644.

Sokel, Walter H. "On the Dionysian in Nietzsche". *New Literary History* 36.4 (2005): 501-520.

Soll, Ivan. "Schopenhauer as Nietzsche's 'Great Teacher' and 'Antipode'". *The Oxford Handbook of Nietzsche*, eds. Ken Gemes and John Richardson. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2013, 160-184.

Solomon, Robert C. "Nietzsche's Fatalism". *A Companion to Nietzsche*, ed. Keith Ansell-Pearson. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006, 419-434.

Stack, George J. *Lange and Nietzsche*. Berlin: W. De Gruyter, 1983.

_____. *Nietzsche and Emerson: An Elective Affinity*. Athens: Ohio University Press, 1992.

Starobinski, Jean. *Montaigne in Motion*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer. Chicago: University of Chicago, 2009.

Sybylla, Roe. "Down to Earth with Nietzsche: The Ethical Effects of Attitudes toward Time and Body". *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 7.3 (2004): 309-328.

Tournon, André. "Suspense philosophique et ironie: la zététique de l'essai ". *Montaigne Studies* 12 (2000): 45-62.

Ure, Michael. *Nietzsche's Therapy: Self-cultivation in the Middle Works*. Lanham, MD: Lexington, 2008.

Urpeth, Jim. "A 'Pessimism of Strength': Nietzsche and the Tragic Sublime". *Nietzsche's Futures*, ed. John Lippitt. New York: St. Martin's, 1999, 129-148.

Urs Sommer, Andreas. "Nihilism and Skepticism in Nietzsche". *A Companion to Nietzsche*, ed. Keith Ansell-Pearson. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006, 250-269.

Whitlock, Greg. *Returning to Sils-Maria: A Commentary to Nietzsche's Also Sprach Zarathustra*. Peter Lang Publishing Inc., 1990.

Williams, William David. *Nietzsche and the French: A Study of the Influence of Nietzsche's French Reading on His Thought and Writing*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1952.

Zalloua, Zahi Anbra. "Montaigne, Skepticism and Immortality". *Philosophy and Literature* 27.1 (2003): 40-61.

_____. *Montaigne and the Ethics of Skepticism*. Charlottesville, VA: Rookwood, 2005.

Zumbrunnen, John. "'Courage in the Face of Reality': Nietzsche's Admiration for Thucydides". *Polity* 35.2 (2002): 237-263.